



# Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)

<b>Date approved</b>	Lent 2021	<b>Approved by</b>	St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy
<b>Review cycle</b>	2 years	<b>Signature</b>	
<b>Due for review by</b>		<b>Name</b>	

*This policy operates in line with our school mission, Catholic ethos and best safeguarding practice. St Mary's is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

It is the role of our bishop (cf Can 806), through the delegated authority of his education officers, to ensure that all teaching in Catholic schools, including Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education, is in accordance with Catholic principles and that it is excellent in its own right.

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education is part of the mission of Catholic schools to educate the whole person. It should be carried out as part of the holistic education which seeks to form as well as inform young people in preparation for adult life.

In his apostolic exhortation 'Amoris Laetitia' 2016 (The Joy of Love) Pope Francis reiterates the need for sex education as expressed by the Second Vatican Council. 280. The Second Vatican Council spoke of the need for 'a positive and prudent sex education' to be imparted to children and adolescents 'as they grow older'. He also states that this should be suited to the age of the children and young people. 281. Sex education should provide information while keeping in mind those children and young people have not yet attained full maturity. The information has to come at a proper time and in a way suited to their age.

The Catholic Church states that "as children advance in years, they should be given positive and prudent sex education". Thus St Mary's SRE programme is designed to empower students to make good decisions based on accurate knowledge and will provide appropriate teaching at a level suitable to the growing child at all stages of his/her development.

## 2. DEFINING RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE)

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". 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 our school, the focus should be on "teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships, with particular reference to friendships, family relationships, and relationships with other children and with adults." This includes the topics of families and the people of who care for me, caring friendships, respectful relationships, online relationships and being safe.

## 3. STATUTORY CURRICULUM

We are legally required to teach those aspects of RSE which are statutory parts of National Curriculum Science. However, the reasons for our inclusion of RSE go further.

#### **4. RATIONALE**

'I HAVE COME THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE AND HAVE IT TO THE FULL'

(Jn.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 (and the Welsh Assembly Government) 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. It will also prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

#### **5. 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 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.

#### **6. AIM OR 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 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"<sup>1</sup> which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

#### **7. 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

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<sup>1</sup> *Gravissimum Educationis* 1  
RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help. (In looking at these questions, it is important to draw links to our school's inclusion policy).

## **8. EQUALITIES OBLIGATIONS**

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.

## **9. BROAD CONTEXT 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.

### **9.1 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

### **9.2 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.

### **9.3 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.

#### **9.4 Implementation**

St Mary's, in undertaking its responsibilities, aims to:

- present clearly a Christian sexual ethic based on the teaching and wisdom of the Church
- encourage the development of a personal moral code rooted in Gospel values and to promote self-confidence and self-esteem
- encourage growth in self-respect, self-restraint and respect for others
- develop attitudes to sexual activity that are caring and responsible
- help students appreciate the benefits of stable married life and the responsibilities of parenthood
- help students recognise the physical, emotional and moral risks of irresponsible sexual behaviour
- present facts in an objective and balanced way, enabling students to discuss issues without embarrassment or fear of ridicule
- enable students to evaluate the information they receive from peers, the media and today's society
- develop an awareness of one's legal obligation regarding sexual behaviour.

## **10. PROGRAMME/ RESOURCES**

**10.1** We use a range of resources at St Mary's. These include:

- Journey in Love – a recommended scheme for pupils aged 4-11 years
- Materials from Sister Dorothy, who has provided guidance for schools via Diocesan training based on her work both as a mid-wife and supporting the delivery of quality RSE in schools
- The Come and See RE programme, which supports the development of positive relationships with self and others
- The National Curriculum, where the subjects of PSHE and Science in particular cross reference our RSE work

**10.2** Teaching strategies will include:

- establishing ground rules
- distancing techniques
- discussion
- project learning
- reflection
- experiential

- active
- brainstorming
- film & video
- group work
- role-play
- trigger drawings
- values clarification

Pupils' learning will be assessed in conversation with staff, recorded work in workbooks and class floor books, as appropriate; reflection time is included within the programmes used in school to facilitate valuable learning opportunities and retention of information.

## 11. 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 school, we provide the principal means by which the Church assists parents and carers in educating their children. 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 headteacher. 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).

## 12. 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. 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.

## 13. RESPONSIBILITY FOR TEACHING THE PROGRAMME

Responsibility for the specific relationships and sex education programme lies with class teachers.

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.

### **13.1 Governors**

The Governing Body will regularly update the RSE policy, in consultation with parents, and will make copies of the policy available to them.

### **13.2 Headteacher**

The Head Teacher will have overall responsibility for the delivery of RSE in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Head Teacher will delegate specific responsibilities appropriately.

### **13.3 Teachers**

Teachers have a responsibility of care. They should contribute to the guidance of the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of their students. Teachers who are asked to teach RSE should ensure that they do so in accordance with the Catholic ethos of St Mary's. The staff involved in this very important work should be properly trained and highly motivated, in order to give the best help they can to the students and their parents.

### **13.4 Pupils**

Pupils should be willing to listen to the teaching of the Church, and they should have a concern for, and accept responsibility for, their knowledge and understanding of their sexual development.

### **13.5 Parents and Carers**

See section above.

### **13.6 External Visitors**

Our school will often 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. Any visitor must adhere to our code of practice developed in line with CES guidance 'Checklist for External Speakers to Schools.

Health professionals should follow the school'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.

### **13.7 The Wider Community**

The school will make appropriate use of external agencies and their personnel, provided they are able to adhere to the school's guidelines which are rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church.

### **13.8 Guidelines on Confidentiality**

Pupils have a legal right to confidentiality and there is no obligation for St Mary's to involve parents/carers should a pupil expressly forbid it. Nevertheless, the school will do all in its power to ensure that parents are informed of any concerns regarding possible pregnancy or medical issues. Students will be strongly encouraged to inform their parents themselves of such issues. St Mary's cannot offer absolute confidentiality, for if there are child protection issues, the Child Protection Officer must be informed so that the St Mary's Child Protection Policy can be followed.

## **14. RELATIONSHIP ATO OTHER POLICIES AND CURRICULUM SUBJECTS**

This RSE policy is to be delivered as part of the PSHE framework. It includes guidelines about pupil safety and is compatible with the school's other policy documents (for example, Anti-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 PSHE classes will link to/complement learning in those areas identified in the RSE audit.

## **15. CHILDREN'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.

### **15.1 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. (See also Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education, Managing difficult questions, Page 23 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.

## **16. 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.

## **17. 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.

## **18. 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.

### **Appendices**

Journey in Love overview

[Link to CES website](#)

[Link to DfE guidance](#)