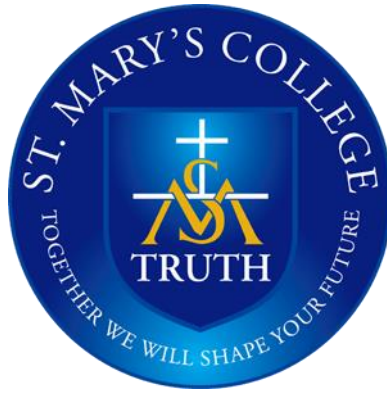




ST MARY'S COLLEGE

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE)

DATE ADOPTED:	February 2024
REVIEW DATE:	February 2027
PRINCIPAL'S SIGNATURE:	Mr B Mc Ginn
CHAIRPERSON TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS SIGNATURE:	Mrs S Kelly

Saint Mary's College

Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND ETHOS

RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) in Saint Mary's College is taught within the ethos of our school vision statement; "St Mary's College's vision is to create a safe, vibrant, and inclusive learning community placing at its centre our Mercy Values rooted in the Catholic Faith. We will strive to ensure each child is nurtured spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially including responsible citizenship, global awareness, and life lasting wellbeing skills."

Saint Mary's College view the development and implementation of a policy in Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) as an important step towards achieving our aim to develop all aspects of a young person's personality and growth. The morals and values of our Catholic ethos are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and develops throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships. As parents/carers are the primary educators of their children, we will endeavour to engage in full consultation with them regarding aims, objectives and the teaching programme of this policy and their views will be considered when implementing and reviewing this policy.

In line with our school's ethos, RSE should provide opportunities that enable pupils to:

- Form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework consistent with our Catholic ethos
- Learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect
- Build the foundations for developing more positive personal relationships in later life make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

DEFINITION

RSE is lifelong learning about physical, moral, and emotional development. RSE should provide young people with the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not simply intimate relationships. It provides young people with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs, and skills necessary to establish and sustain personal relationships throughout their lives. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good

friend. It also aims to encourage young people to make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and about the way in which they live their lives. All this is delivered within a moral, spiritual, and social framework that promotes the Catholic values of our school ethos of educating the whole person, blending learning with faith and faith with daily life in an open, happy, stimulating and mutually respectful environment for our young people.

“The vision, the values, the human and Christian virtues, the revealed truths and the lived tradition which go to make up the Christian understanding of life cannot be taught without reference to sexuality and procreation and the responsible, respectful and loving use of these gifts of God.”

Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education: Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference
<http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2014/04/08/guidelines-relationships-sexuality-education/>

RATIONALE

The school is involved in relationships and sexuality 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. RSE will be firmly embedded in the Enrichment, LLW, HE, Science, PE, Health and Social Care, English, and the RE Curriculum 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 delivered 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.

THE CENTRALITY OF VIRTUE

Our RSE 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.

PRINCIPLES

Relationships and Sexuality Education at St. Mary's College is delivered within a framework which allows us to:

- Reflect the ethos and values of the school and its wider Christian community.
- Present the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church in an accurate and balanced manner in order to encourage the pupils to know, understand and appreciate the moral values underlying Catholic precepts and standards.
- See sexuality as a God-given gift and an integral part of human development.
- Recognise that parents are the primary providers of RSE to their children and that school plays a supportive role in this area.
- Provide sufficient educational opportunity to our pupils to make appropriate decisions on sexual matters based on accurate factual/legal information and with an informed conscience.
- Respects the dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child.

PURPOSES

In line with our school Ethos, The Catholic School's Trustee's Service and CCEA guidelines the Relationships and Sexuality Education policy the purpose of teaching RSE is St Mary's College is to:

- To promote a positive sense of self awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
- To create an atmosphere in which dignified and honest discussion regarding human sexuality can take place and which helps our pupils to be open about their doubts, anxieties and experiences.
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their own sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To help young people recognise their worth and dignity as children of God.
- To help young people appreciate their uniqueness and full potential as human beings.

- To enable young to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God.
- To promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment.
- To encourage the development of social skills necessary for pupils to resist the pressures that might lead to premature sexual experience.
- To enable pupils to recognise the physical, emotional and moral implications and risks of certain types of behaviour, and to understand that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters.
- To foster the growth of values which impact on moral behaviour personally and socially.
- To promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed.
- To encourage a deep respect for women and men within the context of the school among staff, students and parents.
- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships that are based on self and mutual respect, non-exploitation, self-restraint, honesty trust and commitment.
- To promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions.
- To help the young person to value family life and marriage.
- To promote respect for self and others and the right of others to hold different views from oneself without aggression or antagonism.
- To develop a respect for diversity and inclusion.
- To encourage pupils to recognise the right of other traditions to hold different beliefs and values.
- To recognise that the morals and values held by families and pupils who make up the school community are likely to be diverse and that sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt to them and their families and to allow each person a sense of worth.
- To promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death

- To recognise the positive benefits of a permanent committed sexual relationship with one person.
- To appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- To acknowledge being single and celibate as a positive and fulfilling option.
- To recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships.
- To recognise that within relationships there should be rights, duties and responsibilities involved.
- To ensure that any outside agency and/or individual involved with the school respects the ethos, morals and values of the school.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our vision 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 values state that we are committed to our Catholic ethos, Mercy values and Faith Formation in our pupils and to strive for Truth as embodied in our school motto. We are committed to working as a community fostering strong, positive and respectful relationships with and between our pupils, staff, parents / guardians. We are committed to fostering, nurturing and supporting the academic and pastoral provision for each and every child and we strive for success and continuous improvement in all we do in a climate of mutual respect, forgiveness and compassion and one that is always Christ and child-centred.

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

AIMS

In line with our school Ethos, The Catholic School's Trustee's Service and CCEA guidelines the Relationships and Sexuality Education policy aims to:

- Promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework
- Help young people appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God

- Enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God
- Promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death
- Value the gifts of marriage and the family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience
- Understand marriage as the sacramental sign of God's love for his Church
- Enable young people to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others.
- Value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships and understand the law in relation to consent
- Recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships
- Understand that being single and chaste is a virtuous, positive and fulfilling option
- Promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed
- Encourage the young to witness to human dignity at all times online
- Encourage the young to see social media as another tool to reach people with the message that sexuality is a gift from God, not to be squandered and abused
- Recognise common mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm and compulsive behaviours in themselves

OBJECTIVES

In line with our school Ethos, The Catholic School's Trustee's Service and CCEA guidelines the Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum attempts to enable students to:

- Realise that relationships can cause strong feelings and emotions including sexual attraction
- Know the features of positive and stable relationships (including trust, mutual respect, honesty, equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (including imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, abuse of any kind)
- Help pupils cope with the breakdown of a relationship and the effect of change, including loss, separation, divorce and bereavement

- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem
- Acquire and develop an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality and development
- Cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- Understand different family structures, and the diversity of family life
- Recognise the need for self-control and the importance of the virtue of chastity
- Explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality
- Recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it
- Recognise the need for online safety
- Recognise the impact of drugs and alcohol on choices and sexual behaviour
- Be aware that the media portrayal of relationships may not reflect real life and understand the possible impact of this on people's expectations of relationships
- Help young people to become aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships and reduce people to objects for gratification

SKILLS PROMOTED (including personal and social skills)

Pupils will develop the ability to:

- Form and maintain healthy, positive relationships which reflect the dignity of the human person
- Make sound judgements and good choices
- Manage emotions within relationships and the breakdown of relationships with sensitivity and dignity
- Manage conflict positively and enable pupils to recognise the value of difference
- Critically evaluate a wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values

- Develop the communication skills of active listening, negotiation, offering and receiving constructive feedback and assertiveness
- Cultivate mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven
- Develop skills and strategies to respond appropriately to exploitation, bullying, harassment, and control in relationships (including the unique challenges posed by online abuse and the unacceptability of physical, emotional, sexual abuse)
- Recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of both emotional and physical abuse or violence including 'honour' based violence, forced marriage and rape)
- Be able to access support for self or others at risk
- Develop the skills to challenge sexist, homophobic, racist and disablist language and behaviour
- Evaluate the effect of alcohol and drug use on decision making and personal safety
- Build resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so develop the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately
- Develop coping strategies to overcome mental health issues and to recognise when they need to employ strategies to re-establish positive mental health including managing stress and anxiety

PRACTICE

Organisation

The RSE programme is overseen by the Vice Principal for Key Stage 3, Head of Religious Education, Head of LLW, Head of Science, Head of Health & Social Care, Head of Home Economics and Head of English, Head of PE and the Wellbeing Coordinator who will review the programme and whole school policy within the policy review cycle (3 years) via reports from appropriate teachers and any input received from parents in the course of the previous year. They will identify in-service training for all appropriate staff in topics which they feel require additional help and this training will be arranged by the RSE Coordinator, who is the Vice Principal for Key Stage 3.

Implementation across the curriculum:

Many aspects of the RSE programme will be taught or reinforced by the general climate and everyday interactions within the classroom and the school. The RSE programme will be delivered primarily within:

- The core syllabus of Religious Education
- Key Stage 3 Living Love Programme designed by The Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (see appendix one) This is cross curricular in nature, elements of the programme will be delivered through RE, English, Enrichment, LLW, Science, and Home Economics
- OCN RE Syllabus – Key Stage 4
- GCSE and A Level RE Syllabus
- Learning for Life and Work. (LLW)
- Health and Social Care GCSE and A Level Syllabus
- The compulsory Programmes of Study for Science for all Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils.

The major themes and topics covered during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are to be found in the Appendix.

Class Organisation

At Key Stage 3 RSE will be taught within form class groups and at Key Stage 4 with options subjects and the compulsory programmes of study for RE, Health and Social Care, Home Economics, PE and Science.

Criteria for Resource Selection:

Resources are selected on the basis that they provide accurate factual information and that they are suitable for the pupils' needs, age, stage of development, and maturity. It is essential that they be used in a way which reflect accurately, the school's agreed moral and value framework.

The resource used in Key Stage 3 is the Living Love Programme designed by The Catholic Schools' Trustee Service (see appendix one)

The use of Resources

Teachers involved in the delivery of RSE will ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school. We will review and quality-assure all the resources chosen before the pupils use them.

Inappropriate Images

Inappropriate images should not be used under any circumstances and we will ensure that as far as possible on the C2K system we will protect pupils from accessing unsuitable material on the internet. We will inform parents or carers about any materials that pupils will be exposed to, particularly if these are of a sensitive nature.

Teaching Strategies

RSE aims to develop personal and social skills and clarify attitudes and values within a moral framework. RSE seeks to promote behaviour which will allow pupils to take increasing responsibility for themselves as they grow and develop. Teaching methods which involve pupils actively in the process of their own learning. Specifically, in terms of organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats all pupils with due sensitivity and care. Some important considerations might be:

- The degree of trust, respect and positive regard for pupils;
- The relationship between the teacher and the pupils and among the pupils themselves;
- The need for clear expectations, goals and learning objectives.

Creating a safe, welcoming learning environment:

A safe school is one that affirms the value of every individual. Each person is made in God's image and is loved by God and the Church.

- 1 Teach the fundamental principle of respect for human dignity.
- 2 Challenge any homophobic remarks.
- 3 Deal firmly with any acts of bullying or discrimination.
- 4 Follow school procedures for accessing outside support for the student.
- 5 Support the parents. Parents may want to speak to someone at the school.
- 6 Arrange a meeting with the parents and relevant support agencies to consider any appropriate measures of support that may be needed.
- 7 Follow school procedures for monitoring the well-being of student/s.

Assessment of RSE

The nature of RSE is strongly orientated towards Personal Development which does not necessarily lend itself to summative assessment. RSE is not easily measurable as it is qualitative rather than quantitative. When required, RSE will be assessed and reported on in Years 8 – 12 by the Teacher who delivers the module at that level.

USE OF OUTSIDE AGENCIES INCLUDING THE INVOLVEMENT OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Where appropriate, the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals may be accessed. Where this occurs, the school should be satisfied that to contributions from informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school. They will ensure that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice.

It is essential that all outside visitors/speakers be approved by the Principal/Vice Principal for Key Stage 3 / Head of RE.

A preliminary visit to the school to discuss ethical/practical considerations is advised. Appropriate follow up in relation to guest speakers is also advised. The Head of RE and teachers involved in the delivery of RSE should ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school.

It is essential that **all external agencies** supporting RSE should sign a service agreement (see **Appendix 3**) agreeing with the RSE policy of the school and the underpinning ethos of the school and that this record is kept in a safe place as part of the delivery of RSE and for authenticity.

It is vital that any outside agency/individual delivering a support session in a school

- Receives a copy of the school's Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy
- Is made aware of and adheres to the school's Child Protection Policy
- Receives a copy of the school's policy on the use of outside agencies/visitors
- Agrees to respect the ethos of the school
- Is made aware of the issues around confidentiality
- Is vetted as appropriate

Parents/carers should be made aware in advance of the use of outside agencies. Schools should explain the type of activities which will take place to ensure that parents and carers have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit. Doing this will also have the added benefit of letting parents or carers know what is going on and strengthen ties between home and school.

During the session the teacher/s should be present at all times. Afterwards the teacher/s should provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss their experience/s and honestly evaluate the session/s. Schools can use their student feedback to inform future planning and provision along with any evaluation carried out by the outside agency/individual.

PARENTS AND CARERS

Parents/Carers will be fully informed of the content, timing and the delivery of the RSE programme in order to enable them to support the work of the school and to enable parents to discuss the topics and issues raised by the programme with their children. This will be done by sending an outline of programme home usually:

- (a) at the beginning of school year or
- (b) just prior to the commencement of any extraordinary programme that is in direct response to the needs of the school community

Face to Face Meetings

Parents may request to meet with the Principal/ Vice Principal for Key Stage 3 or Head of RE either at the beginning of the school year or prior to the commencement of the programme to learn about and discuss the content, the teaching methods, and the timing of the

programme, and to voice any concerns they might have regarding the programme and its delivery.

Induction Literature

Incoming Year 8 pupils will receive information about the RSE programme in the Year 8 Induction booklet. This will contain information on the content, timing and cross curricular nature of the RSE programme. This will give parents/carers an opportunity to participate in the programme alongside their children and in so doing build positive relationships.

School Website

The RSE policy in its entirety will be posted on the school website so it is available for parents/carers to download.

ENSURING THE CURRICULUM IS BALANCED

While promoting Catholic values and virtues, 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 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 and to relate to other individuals in a mature and respectful way.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR TEACHING THE PROGRAMME

The programme will be led By Mrs Roisin Rice, Vice Principal for Key Stage 3 who will be supported by Miss Deirdre McElholm, Head of RE. It will cross curricular in nature and will be taught by subject specialist teachers of RE, Enrichment, English, PE, Science, LLW and Home Economics and Health and Social Care.

OTHER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Trustees

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, organisational nature and ethos of their respective schools. The Bishop is responsible for all Catholic schools in his Diocese as evidenced by Canon Law 806§ which states that,

"The diocesan bishop has the right of supervision, visitation and inspection of Catholic schools in his diocese, even those established or directed by members of religious orders. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools."

Board of Governors

Every School a Good School - The Governors' Role: A Guide for Governors outlines the role and responsibilities of Governors. Section 13.40 states,

“Boards of Governors should ensure that their schools have a Relationships and Sexuality Education policy and curriculum linked to their pastoral care/child protection policy. This policy and the associated teaching should be the subject of consultation with staff and parents and endorsed by the Governors.”

The Board of Governors should foster and support the development of an RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents. It should also facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute. The governors should examine and approve the completed policy and programme prior to their implementation in the school and review the policy at regular intervals.

At all times the governors of the school should seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all young people.

Principal and Senior Leadership Team

As with all subject areas, it is the role of the Principal to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the ethos of the school. It is the role of the Vice Principals to support the work of the Principal. The Vice Principal for Key Stage 3 will be charged with responsibility for RSE it is her responsibility to ensure that RSE is delivered in a way which is in keeping with the ethos of the school.

The Principal and Senior Leadership Team will co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and consult the Board of Governors, staff, parent(s)/carer(s) and health professionals, as appropriate.

RSE Co-ordinator/ Head of RE/Cross Curricular Working Party

The RSE co-ordinator is a member of staff appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the Department of Education specifications and the programme designed for the pupils. It is essential that the co-ordinator is respectful and committed to the school's ethos and the aims and direction of RSE within the school.

The RSE Co-ordinator's role includes:

- Upholding and ensuring that the programme is taught in accordance with the school's Catholic ethos;
- Ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils;
- Liaising with the Board of Governors, the Principal, the Vice Principal (Pastoral), all staff, parents and health and educational visitors on RSE matters;
- Attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members;
- Organising training for staff as and when appropriate;
- Liaising with outside agencies where appropriate.

Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher/Special Needs Co-ordinator

The Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator will form part of the cross-curricular team and provide relevant information which will ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

The Pastoral Team will ensure that the RSE topics delivered through Pastoral Programmes are in line with the Catholic ethos of the school. The Pastoral Team will liaise with the Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator where necessary.

Teaching Staff

The staff provide a link through communicating the content of RSE and the relevant programme, possibly through curriculum meetings and by other means. Teachers are of central importance in terms of review of RSE provision. They are also key to identifying their own needs around ongoing professional development in their RSE work.

Chaplain

The role of the chaplain is to:

- Support the teaching of RSE where possible;
- Meet with the co-ordinator to discuss the RSE programme and its delivery in school;
- Witness to Gospel values.

Diocesan Advisor/Diocesan Advisor Support Service

The Diocesan Advisor supports schools in the development and delivery of an RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic ethos and respects the wishes of parents.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES AND OTHER CURRICULUM SUBJECTS

To ensure consistency all school policies should strive to be consistent and coherent within the framework of the overall school development plan. The RSE policy is developed in this context and shares links with, the following policies:

- Religious Education
- Teaching and Learning
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- Personal Development
- Anti-Bullying
- Positive Behaviour
- Drugs
- Internet Safety/E-safety
- Homework
- Use of outside agencies and vetting arrangements

RESPONDING TO PUPILS' QUESTIONS AND SENSITIVE AREAS

While it is important to create an environment in which pupils can discuss issues openly, teachers may not always be able to answer all questions about issues and should set appropriate boundaries. Teachers should use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the pupils, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Any advice provided and the way teachers respond should support the role of the pupils' parents or carers and reflect the ethos of the school.

All staff teaching RSE related issues should use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme. The use of common slang should be avoided.

Teachers should remember that, as they are not medical professionals, they must not give personal medical advice to any pupil. Teachers must advise pupils to seek advice from parents or carers and health professionals. If any question asked raises child protection issues, this should be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

Boundary Setting

It is essential to set parameters for the teaching of sensitive issues. The Code of Conduct listed below will ensure that the right to privacy for both student and teacher is always respected.

Code of Conduct

1. Teach the fundamental principle of respect for human persons
2. Challenge any discriminatory remarks
3. Deal firmly with any acts of bullying, including homophobic, transphobic and cyberbullying
4. Follow school procedures for accessing outside support for any student requiring additional help
5. Support the parents. Parents may want to speak to someone at the school about one or more of these issues.
6. Arrange a meeting with the parents and relevant support agencies to consider any
7. appropriate measures of support that may be needed to ensure the needs of the student
8. are met.
9. Follow school procedures for monitoring the well-being of student/s.
10. Provide time and safe spaces for young people, in an age and stage appropriate way, to engage at a deep level with these issues, to dialogue with their peers and their teacher and to be invited into a rich understanding of the Church's teaching in these areas.

We acknowledge the right of pupils and others to disagree with the Church's perspective, and their right to respectfully offer alternative perspectives and to engage in open and productive dialogue. However, while there may be differing perspectives on issues, We will not avoid teaching what it is that the Church professes.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

The Status of the Family

In keeping with the right of Catholic schools to present RSE within its own ethos, the school supports the Sacramental vision of marriage and family, while being sensitive to other family situations. The Catholic understanding of marriage will be presented and sexual intimacy will be taught in the context of a God-given gift that enables married men and women to express and deepen their love for each other, a love that should unite the couple as well being open to the gift of new life. The Church's teaching on Sacramental Marriage as a permanent, exclusive union between one man and one woman open to the transmission of new life will be presented as the Catholic understanding of the context for sexual intimacy.

The Virtue of Chastity

In line with the ethos of the school and Christian morals, sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it, will be presented as a positive, desirable and achievable option. The ideal context for sexual intimacy is a committed, permanent heterosexual relationship between a man and a woman.

The Sanctity of Life

In keeping with the right of Catholic schools to present RSE within its own ethos, the value and sacredness of life will be actively promoted. From the moment of conception, the embryo is a human being and must be recognised as having the rights of a person. The most fundamental right for every human being is the right to life. This belief is one of the foundation stones on which the RSE programme is built. Life is sacred from conception to the moment of natural death.

Sexual Orientation

In accordance with the Catholic ethos of our school, we uphold the Church's teaching that the meaning and purpose of sexual intimacy is fully realized in the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, faithful to one another for life and open to the possibility of transmission of new life, while recognizing and respecting the different views of others. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably or isolated in any way on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Antagonism/bullying or other forms of abuse against pupils who reveal that they are homosexual will not be tolerated by the school. Respect for all people regardless of sexual orientation will be promoted in line with the school ethos – no pupils should be isolated on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Pupils have the right to hold different views/lifestyles in a peaceful manner.

The Catholic ethos of the school ensures that gospel values, inclusivity, equality and respect for all and the right of everyone to learn in a safe and secure environment where all are treated with respect and dignity. The ethos of a Catholic school supports the guidance produced by the Equality Commission on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination. This guidance relates to the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the guidance from the Equality Commission (NI) in March 2009.

In the school anti-bullying policy, specific reference should be made to homophobic bullying, transgender bullying, cyber bullying, sexual harassment and bullying for other reasons relating to sex, gender, or relationships.

‘Bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation is as unacceptable as it is in any other situation where someone is mistreated or bullied because of their differences from those who are perceived to be the majority. All issues relating to bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation will be dealt with appropriately in line with the school’s anti-bullying policy.’

Pastoral Care of Young People with Gender Dysphoria

The disclosure of gender dysphoria by a child or young person is first and foremost a pastoral and welfare issue. As such, the priority of the school is to create a safe environment in which the vulnerable child can receive the support that they require.

Family Planning

In Familiaris Consortio (1981:14) Pope John Paul II spoke of God’s plan when he said that marriage is ‘the foundation of the wider community of the family,’ and that the ‘institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children.’ In accordance with this, Catholic teaching places sexual intercourse within the Sacrament of Marriage and the use of any artificial means of preventing procreation is not acceptable. Catholic teaching on family planning will be presented and pupils will also be provided with accurate information about methods of artificial contraception in an age appropriate and sensitive manner.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

It is important that pupils are provided with accurate, information about sexually transmitted infections, their transmission, the inherent dangers of risk-taking behaviour and how to obtain appropriate advice if they are concerned about their sexual health. Information on how to prevent the spread of infections should take note of the fact that the best way to prevent infection is to practice sexual abstinence before marriage and monogamy (inside marriage).

Digital Safety

The RSE Programme will teach pupils how to safely navigate the digital world. Technology plays an integral role in the lives of pupils which poses both opportunities and risks. The RSE Programme will raise awareness of potential threats or dangers posed by the Internet such as sexting, cyber-bullying, pornography, abuse and exploitation. Pupils will explore the implications of the law, the strategies they can use to protect themselves and where they can access advice and support if they are at risk.

Equal Opportunity

All students, have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, regardless of their age, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion and social class.

SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN)

SEN pupils will have appropriate, accessible and relevant Relationships and Sexuality Education. 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. This will be planned to meet different needs as they arise to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN compared to their peers. The content and delivery may be different depending on the differing needs of SEN pupils. We will communicate with parents or carers of young people with SEN about the content of the programme and the date when classes will cover certain teaching activities/themes. This communication will allow for parents/guardians or carers to reinforce learning at home. It is widely recognised that students with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation.

Teachers will try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of students to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour;
- help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe;
- recognise and build healthy relationships; and
- know who they can talk to.

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.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND CHILD PROTECTION

Young people will 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, at times, 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.

While pupils should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Confidentiality should be respected unless a teacher becomes aware that a young person is at risk, in which case the appropriate action should be taken e.g. follow the procedures set down in Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines for Post Primary Schools or the Schools Substance Use Policy, and notify parents/carers.

Disclosures

Where disclosure to parents/carers may place a young person in a potentially harmful situation, the school must follow the Child Protection procedures as laid out in the Department of Education **Circular 2017/04 Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools**.

The student's right to privacy should always be respected by both the teacher and the other pupils in the class but staff cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality to pupils on issues relating to Child Protection.

- We understand that the child's right to privacy must always be respected by the teacher and other pupils. Children will not be expected to answer any personal questions.
- Teachers will not promise confidentiality. A child does not have the right to expect incidents in the classroom or school to go unreported.
- The Principal or designated teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest a child is at risk from physical or sexual abuse.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The RSE programme will be monitored and evaluated by:

- Teacher/pupil/parent surveys
- Year teacher/Form teacher meetings.
- Subject department meetings.

The results from evaluations can be used to determine:

- Priorities for future staff training and support.
- The nature of ongoing consultation with parents.
- Any changes in content or timing of RSE programme.
- Any changes in methods or resources used.

The results of the evaluation will 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.

Staff Development and Training

Training should be organised by the RSE co-ordinator, in consultation with the Principal/Vice Principals and Senior Leadership Team. Where it is deemed necessary the Diocesan Education Advisors, the Education Authority Advisors and other outside agencies may be consulted. Dissemination of training can take place during school in-service days.

It is essential that training be provided both for
(a) new staff to the programme and

(b) new teachers to the school.

It is recognised that no teacher should have to undertake delivery of the RSE programme without adequate training.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

We recognise that parents are the primary providers of RSE to their children. The function of the school is to play a supportive role in this area. To ensure that parents are involved in the introduction, development and implementation of a programme of RSE, the Board of Governors will ensure that:

- Parents are consulted on the development of a policy for RSE.
- Consultation will be carried out via the PFTA
- Consultation with Staff takes place via staff development training days and feedback through discussion, questionnaires if appropriate and email.
- Consultation with pupils will be carried out via the Student Council.

Parents, staff and pupils are actively encouraged to participate in the process of development and review of all relevant school policies. Parental feedback is requested in a number of ways:

- PTA annual survey
- Letter and policy copy to parents requesting comments and feedback as appropriate, either at the end of academic year or beginning of new term as appropriate for regular policy review. (3year review cycle)

Withdrawal from RSE

The NI Curriculum Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance 2015 states that, Whilst Relationships and Sexuality Education is a statutory component of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, parents or carers have a right to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes.

The school recognises that the parent/guardian has the right to withdraw their child from the RSE programme if they wish to do so. Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their daughter must contact the Principal/ Vice Principal for Key Stage 3 in the first instance. This request should be made in writing to the Principal in September of each year. Parents/Guardians will be informed where students are withdrawn from RSE. The school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students.

Dealing with parents' concerns

All comments made by parents regarding the delivery of the RSE programme will be treated seriously and with sensitivity. Parents will have an opportunity to meet with the relevant co-ordinator/Head of Department to discuss any concerns they might have.

TERMINOLOGY:

All staff teaching RSE related issues should use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts, where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme. The use of common slang should be avoided. Teachers could point out that the use of slang words, or offensive words often indicates embarrassment, the lack of knowledge and/or a lack of respect for self and others.

Sexuality: People are sexual beings. Sexuality is about much more than its biological aspects as it concerns the innermost being of the human person. We believe sexuality is a gift from God. It is the drive within every person to give and receive love and affection. Our sexuality shapes and permeates all our relationships.

Morality: is essentially linked with behaviour and what we do. It is also connected with experience, faith and decision making.

Ethics: are the moral principles that a person uses to guide and to judge their actions.

Values: the attitudes, beliefs, virtues and principles which inform his/her behaviour e.g. respect for self, honesty with self and others.

Personal: Morality is about each of us taking responsibility for the choices we make. We endeavour to prepare our pupils to make moral decisions with an 'informed conscience'. Pastoral Care, Guidance and Discipline procedure, Child Protection, Anti-bullying Policy, Drugs Policy, Curriculum Policy, Acceptable Use of Internet policy and any relevant Departmental policies associated with the delivery of RSE programme.

Glossary

AL Amoris Laetitia

AMCSS Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools

CCEA Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

DENI Department of Education in Northern Ireland

ECHR European Court of Human Rights

ETI Education Training Inspectorate

FC Familiaris Consortio

GE Gaudete et Exsultate

LLW Learning for Life and Work

UNCRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

NI Northern Ireland

PD Personal Development

PDMU Personal Development & Mutual Understanding

PE Physical Education

RE Religious Education

RSE Relationships and Sexuality Education

SDP School Development Plan

SEN Special Educational Needs

STI Sexually Transmitted Infection

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

REVIEW PROCEDURES

Long Term:

The School Development Committee will review the policy on a three year cycle.

Short Term:

Yearly review by (a) SLT (b) Department Heads.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

The policy will be judged to be effective if:

- Verbal and written feedback is positive.
- Concerns have been successfully dealt with.
- There is evidence to show that the purposes enshrined in our policy have been met.

APPENDIX ONE

Key Stage 3

Cross Curricular Delivery of The Catholic School's Trustee's Service Living Love RSE Programme.

Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
Lesson 1. Who am I? (English) Lesson 2. What do I want in life? (LLW) Lesson 3. Love people/things (Enrichment) Lesson 4. The language of the body (Enrichment) Lesson 5. Puberty (Science) Lesson 6. Friendship (LLW) Lesson 7. Building relationships (RE) Lesson 8. What is love? (RE) Lesson 9. Feelings of attraction (RE) Lesson 10. Making decisions (LLW) Lesson 11. Good choices, bad choices (LLW) Lesson 12. Brain Development (Science) Lesson 13. Peer Pressure (Enrichment)	Lesson 1. The truth about me (Enrichment) Lesson 2. Stereotypes (LLW) Lesson 3. Searching for happiness (Enrichment) Lesson 4. Body Image (HE) Lesson 5. Dignity and respect (RE) Lesson 6. Growing in Friendship (Enrichment) Lesson 7. Building good relationships (Enrichment) Lesson 8. S**xual Attraction (RE) Lesson 9. Love and intimacy (RE) Lesson 10. Growing in Responsibility (Enrichment) Lesson 11. Consent (RE) Lesson 12. Taking care of my body (Science) Lesson 13. Alcohol Awareness (LLW) Lesson 14. Women's safety (RE)	Lesson 1. The real me (Enrichment) Lesson 2. Following a moral compass (Enrichment) Lesson 3. Free to love (Enrichment) Lesson 4. My body and my identity (RE) Lesson 5. Friendship (Enrichment) Lesson 6. Romantic love (RE) Lesson 7. Dating with integrity (RE) Lesson 8. S**x and Marriage (RE) Lesson 9. Decision making (LLW) Lesson 10. Alcohol and Drugs (Science/Enrichment) Lesson 11. Consent Pt2 (RE) Lesson 12. STI Awareness (RE) Lesson 13. The Gift of Fertility (Science)

APPENDIX 2: RSE SUBJECT ORGANISATION TEMPLATE**Relationships and Sexuality Across the Curriculum Within the Subject Domain**

Overview of Self-Awareness/Personal Identity

Personal Development Strand: Revised Curriculum (LLW) Learning Objective 3: Morality (RE)

- ✓ explore the importance of self-confidence and self-esteem to physical and emotional /mental health throughout life.
- ✓ explore the different way to develop self esteem
- ✓ explore issues of personal identity
- ✓ explore personal morals, values and beliefs
- ✓ investigate the influences on a young person

develop skills and strategies to improve own learning

Topic/Themes	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	Yr 14
Self-image, physical and emotional wellbeing /explore and express a sense of self	PE – HPW LLW Child Dev	PE Child Dev	PE RE	PE RE
The concept of creation in the image of God My uniqueness;	PE	RE PE	RE PE	RE
Important people in my life; feelings in a family; getting on with other people; a school is a new family; beginning new friendships	RE PE Child Dev H&SC	Child Dev RE	RE PE H&SC	RE
Coping with the challenges of adolescences-e.g. desire for independence: etc	LLW H&SC	PE	PE RE	PE RE
The concept of right and wrong: the role of conscience/ role of choice	RE LLW	RE LLW	RE Science	RE Science
Developing a moral framework, personal integrity	RE LLW	RE LLW	RE Science H&SC	RE Science
Developing ambitions for life and work	PE RE OS	PE RE H&SC	RE PE	RE PE H&SC Science
Issues of Life and Death – Sanctity of Life	RE	RE	RE PE	RE PE

* RE - Religious Education: *PE Physical Education: * LLW Learning for Life and Work: * Sc: Science: *HE: Home Economics *HS: Health & Social Care *OS = Occupational Studies

APPENDIX 3

Sample Service Level Agreement for External Agencies

I/We acknowledge the school's ethos and policies of _____ and agree to abide by its ethos and policies:

- In working with young people and,
- In the delivery of the programmes outlined below:

I am/we are, willing to provide full details of material content to:

Leadership Management, Teachers, Parents, Governors and other Appropriate Bodies and agree to fully implement any changes deemed necessary by the above representatives.

I accept the right of the school to withdraw the invitation issued to support the school in the education of our young people.

I/We formally accept the above terms of reference and in so doing I/We will acknowledge the agreement made.

Signed _____ (External Agency)

Dated _____

Countersigned _____ (Principal/Board of Governors)

Dated _____

APPENDIX 4

8th October 2024

Dear Parent / Guardian

In Key Stage 3 your child's Relationships and Sexuality Education programme will be concerned with the topics outlined overleaf.

The units form part of your child's Science, Religious Education, Learning for Life and Work, English, Home Economics and Enrichment programmes of study. The programme is called "Living Love" and was created by the Catholic School's Trustee Service to be delivered firmly within the context of the Church's teaching on sexuality. You can view the resources for each lesson on their website: <https://catholiceducation-ni.org/post-primary-rse-resource-living-love/>

We recognise that the parent/guardian has the right to withdraw their child from the RSE programme if they wish to do so. If you have any concerns or wish further information on the teaching of the RSE programme, please contact Mrs Roisin Rice, Vice Principal for Key Stage 3.

We look forward to your continuing support.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brendan McGinn
PRINCIPAL

Year 8		
Topic	Subject	Time frame
What do I want in life?	LLW	September 2024
Making decisions	LLW	September 2024
Who am I?	English	October 2024
Good choices, bad choices	LLW	October 2024
Friendship	Enrichment	November 2024
Love people/things	Enrichment	January 2025
The language of the body	Enrichment	January 2025
Puberty	Science	January 2025
Building relationships	RE	January 2025
What is love?	RE	January 2025
Feelings of attraction	RE	January 2025
Brain Development	Science	January 2025
Peer Pressure	Enrichment	January 2025
Taking care of my body	Science	January 2025
The Gift of Fertility	Science	January 2025
Year 9		
Topic	Subject	Time frame
The truth about me	Enrichment	October 2024
Alcohol and Drugs	Science	October 2024
Searching for happiness	Enrichment	October 2024
Stereotypes	LLW	November 2024
Body Image	HE	January 2025
Dignity and respect	RE	January 2025
Growing in Friendship	Enrichment	January 2025
Building good relationships	Enrichment	January 2025
Sexual Attraction	RE	January 2025
Love and intimacy	RE	January 2025
Growing in Responsibility	Enrichment	January 2025
Consent Pt1	RE	January 2025
Alcohol Awareness	LLW	January 2025
Women's safety	RE	February 2025
Year 10		
Topic	Subject	Time frame
Decision making	LLW	September 2024
The real me	Enrichment	March 2025
Following a moral compass	Enrichment	March 2025
Free to love	Enrichment	March 2025
My body and my identity	RE	March 2025
Romantic love	RE	March 2025
Dating with integrity	RE	March 2025
Consent Pt2	RE	March 2025
Sex and Marriage	RE	March 2025
Friendship	Enrichment	April 2025
STI Awareness	RE	May 2025