

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Introduction

The DFE guidance defines RSE as “lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage and family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health”¹. It is about the development of the pupil’s knowledge and understanding of her/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. The DFE identifies three main elements: “attitudes and values, personal and social skills, and knowledge and understanding”². The reasons for our inclusion of RSE go further.

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 Wales³ and as advocated by the DFE relationships and sex education 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.

¹ Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, DfEE, 2000

² ibid

³ Education in Sexuality, Catholic Education Service

Signature: Chair of Academy Representatives	Name:	Date:
Signature: Principal	Name:	Date:
Signature: Chair of Curriculum Committee	Name:	Date:

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All RSE will be in accordance with the Church's moral teaching. It will emphasise the central importance of marriage and the family whilst acknowledging that all pupils have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from and support will be provided to help pupils deal with different sets of values.

Aim of RSE and the Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that sex and relationship education 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 to "positive and prudent" sex and relationship education"⁴ It is characterised by a whole person, whole school, and developmental approach⁵ thus setting it firmly within our distinctively Christian vision of education.

Objectives

- know that they are a unique creation of God and so are able to grow in self-respect developing a positive attitude to themselves, their feelings and their sexuality
- understand that self-giving love is central to relationships
- recognise the importance of forgiveness and saying sorry in relationships
- understand the reasons for self-respect, and why they should act with respect and responsibility in their relationships
- reflect on their own relationships recognising those qualities that help relationships grow
- develop knowledge, communication skills and understanding in order to help personal decision-making
- act responsibly as an individual and as a member of a group
- identify and have the confidence to talk about their emotions and how to respond positively to them
- communicate a point of view clearly and appropriately and listen to the views of others
- take responsibility for oneself and for one's actions
- come to understand the influence and impact of the media, Internet, peer groups and develop the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately
- explore and respond appropriately to prejudice and gender stereotyping
- think positively about their own body
- understand, in ways appropriate to their age and developmental needs, the changes they will undergo including puberty

⁴ 'Declaration on Christian Education', Vatican II, 1965

⁵ Education in Sexuality, Catholic Education Service

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- know the correct vocabulary for external body parts, sexual organs, and menstruation
- think positively about other people, adults as well as children
- take care of themselves, their health, safety and personal hygiene
- know that some diseases are infectious
- keep themselves safe and ask for help and support when needed
- become aware of good choices and wrong choices and their consequences
- understand that some choices can entail undesirable outcomes, such as psychological distress, physical trauma, STIs, HIV/AIDS, abortion
- make good choices about what to do in particular situations
- manage relationships with friends confidently and effectively
- develop the ability to form positive, non-exploitative relationships and reject bullying
- explore and reflect on their own experience of people who are married
- have an understanding of the family, an appreciation of the values of family life and the roles and responsibilities of family members
- have an understanding of a family as a spiritual community in which members can grow in faith, hope and love
- understand that the difference between male and female is part of God's loving and creative plan
- understand sexual behaviour and reproduction in the context of a loving and self-giving marriage avoiding its reduction to bodily functions
- understand the Church's teaching on sexual activity outside of marriage
- understand the Church's teaching on the distinction between sexual orientation and sexual activity
- understand the difference between natural family planning and artificial contraception
- recognise and appreciate the Catholic belief in the importance of marriage for family life and the bringing up of children

Roles and Responsibilities

Academy Representatives

Draw up the RSE policy, in consultation with parents and teachers;

Ensure that the policy is available to parents;

Ensure that the policy is in accordance with other whole school policies, e.g., SEN, the ethos of the school and our Christian beliefs;

Ensure that parents know of their right to withdraw their children;

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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 SRE within PSHE.

Principal

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.

PSHE/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 are supported by the curriculum deputy and 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.

Parents

Recognising that parents are the primary educators of their children the school will seek to support them in this task. Parents have the right to be consulted before this policy is ratified by the Academy Representatives. 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 sex and relationship education programme.

Should parents wish to withdraw their children they are asked to notify the school by contacting the Principal.

Provision / Programme

Organisation

The three aspects of relationship and sex education, 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.

Staffing

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.

Responsibility for the specific relationships and sex education programme lays with the relevant curriculum staff. This will normally include science, religious education, physical education, RSE and PSHE.

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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

(See also 'Sex and Relationship Guidance'. DCSF 2000 for more detail)

Specific Issues

Inclusion

Equal Opportunities

Ethnic and Cultural Groups

We intend our policy to be sensitive to the needs of different ethnic groups. For some young people it is not culturally appropriate for them to be taught particular items in mixed groups. We will respond to parental requests and concerns.

Pupils with Special Needs

We will ensure that all pupils receive sex and relationship education, and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs of all our pupils, taking specialist advice where necessary.

Relationship to other policies / initiatives

This RSE policy is to be delivered as part of the PSHE framework and thus contribute to the school's National Healthy School Standard. It includes guidelines about pupil safety and is **cross-referenced to the Safeguarding policy**.

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.

Guidelines

The Academy Representatives recognise that RSE can be a sensitive issue for all concerned and are concerned that teachers' training and support needs are properly provided for. The Academy Representatives therefore require the school to provide such training and support to all those involved in the RSE programme. This training will cover legislative requirements, Church teaching, the demands of this policy and the development of appropriate skills to deliver the RSE programme.

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 child protection issue. Teachers will need to be aware of the needs of their pupils and not let any fears and worries go unnoticed. Where

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a teacher suspects that a child is a victim of or is at risk of abuse they should follow the school's child protection policy and immediately inform the designated senior member of staff responsible.

Withdrawal

Parents have **the right to withdraw** their children from RSE excepting those elements which are required by the National Curriculum science orders. However, we will remind parents of the words of the late Cardinal Hume. He expressed some concerns about withdrawing children from sex education lessons. He wondered whether such action might damage the parent-child relationship in terms of confidence and trust, whether it could really inhibit the passing on of information within peer groups and "might well remove one possible means of correcting, or putting in perspective, the uncontrolled information circulating within peer groups." (Cardinal Hume in a speech given at Bradford, reported in Briefing ...). We believe that the controlled environment of the classroom is the safest place for this curriculum to be followed. Parents will be able to examine the programme their children are following and provide additional preparation and information as they wish.

Children's questions

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

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 Academy Representatives 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 'Sex and Relationship Guidance'. DCSF 2000 for more detail)

Confidentiality and Advice

All Academy Representatives, 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.

Safeguarding Procedures

If a teacher has any concerns re the welfare of a particular child then that teacher will make a dated note of their worries and liaise with the nominated persons on the staff. Any information thus obtained will be regarded as strictly confidential and will be passed to staff on a need to know basis only. After consultation it is the decision of the Head teacher as to whether the information is forwarded to the relevant body.

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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 circumstance 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.

If there is a suspicion of possible abuse teachers will follow the school's child protection / safeguarding policy.

External Visitors

National Healthy School criteria 1.7 requires schools 'to involve professionals from appropriate external agencies to create specialist team to support the delivery and improve skills and knowledge...' Schools will often call upon help and guidance from outside agencies and health specialists to deliver aspects of health promotion, in particular RSE within schools. It must however be noted that such visits should always compliment the current programme and never substitute or replace teacher led sessions. The delivery will also be in line with the Church's teaching⁶.

Benefits of external visitors to RSE

- Bring a new perspective to a subject;
- Offer specialized knowledge, experience and resources;
- Make the topic less embarrassing because the visitor is a 'safe stranger';
- Form a friendly link to the community and make local services more accessible;
- Add variety to the curriculum;
- Give support to teachers

It is important that any external visitor is clear about their role and responsibility whilst they are in school delivering a session. It may therefore be beneficial to develop a code of practice, which the external visitor and the school must adhere to.

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.

Monitoring, review and evaluation

The relationship and sex education 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 should be reviewed and evaluated biannually by means of questionnaires / response sheets 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. Academy Representatives will consider all such evaluations and suggestions before amending the policy. Academy Representatives remain ultimately responsible for the policy.

Parents/carers will be issued with a hard copy of this Policy on request. This Policy will also be made available to parents/carers via the School's website.

⁶ Protocol for Visitors to Catholic Schools, CES, Feb. 2011