



St Mary's R.C. High School

PER MARIAM

RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

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RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

1. Vision for Relationship and Sex Education

- 1.1. St Mary's is a Catholic school. Our Relationship and Sex Education Policy is inspired by God's love for us all, made visible in Christ Jesus Our Lord, and unfolded to us through His Church. We care for one another and show mutual respect and love through our relationships with one another.
- 1.2. Our responsibility as a Catholic school is to share in the teaching ministry of Jesus and of the Church and we aim to educate our pupils spiritually and morally as well as intellectually, culturally and physically. We are here to help educate the whole person. Jesus came that we may have life and have it to the full. He always wants us to live in a way that is best for us. Due to our human limitations, it is not always easy for us to see what is best for us, so we turn to Jesus and ask Him to show us the way to the Father, confident of His loving response.
- 1.3. Sex is a great gift from God. It is a beautiful and powerful part of our human nature. Our children deserve to be educated well about this aspect of our humanity.

2. Procedures

The following groups have been consulted as part of producing this policy:

- Staff (Spring term 2018; Summer term 2018; January 2019);
- governing body;
- parents (Spring term 2018; Summer term 2018; January 2019);
- Diocesan Education Service (Spring term 2018; Summer term 2018; Autumn term 2018; January 2019);
- school council (Summer term 2018; January 2019);
- pupils (Summer term 2018; January 2019);
- RSE working party Autumn term 2021.
- Arch Diocese Information sessions for parents Feb 2022

3. Rationale

- 3.1. As a Catholic secondary school in the Province of Cardiff, Menevia, Wrexham and Herefordshire we use the term Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) as we believe that sex education is set within a wider context of relationship education, which itself is about all aspects of growing a fulfilled and happy life. Sex education is but one dimension of this greater whole.
- 3.2. The defining belief of Christianity is that God took on human form. This endows the human person with an extraordinary dignity that goes beyond that of all other forms of life and shows that humanity alone can embrace this relationship with God. Therefore, our relationship with our own bodies is not casual but infused with the Holy Spirit. Any teaching about love and sexual relationships in our school must be rooted in this belief which is expressed in the Church's teaching about relationships, marriage, sex and family life.
- 3.3. The Church educates young people as it is part of complete human formation. Education about human love is no less a part of a Catholic school's responsibility than teaching about any other curriculum subject. At St Mary's we teach young people about how to form relationships, including understanding loving relationships and acknowledging that most young people's first experience of love is in the home. We encourage the young people in our school to recognise that they are all children of God and that each person shares a God-given dignity. As they mature, we encourage them to follow the example of Jesus and live lives inspired by the Gospel virtues, enabling them to follow His commandment to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). We also encourage young people to know that God's love for humanity is so great, he is waiting to forgive us. "We are all sinners, but God heals us with an abundance of grace and mercy." (Pope Francis)



- 3.4. This is the basis for all relationships in our school. Teaching about relationships in our schools is supported by Christian virtue teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in line with 'Fit for Mission? Schools'.
- 3.5. Legal guidelines suggest that relationship and sex education should build on the children's own experiences, be sensitive to the specific domestic contexts the children come from, form attitudes and values towards relationships, develop personal and social skills and increase the knowledge and understanding of each young person, as they grow, about their relationships and well-being, including sexual health. The province supports all these aims in educating about relationships and sex education by incorporating them into the wider understanding of human relationships and human formation as reflected in our CBEW and CES Guidance.

4. Statutory framework

This policy has been developed having regard to the Department for Education guidance "Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education", published 25 June 2019, last updated 13 September 2021

5. Virtues and Values

- 5.1. Gospel virtues and values underpin the RSE curriculum. The Christian tradition describes behaviour or habits that lead to happiness, human flourishing and a closer relationship with God as virtues. These virtues are described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and fall into two groups. The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (sometimes 'love' is used instead of 'charity') are about developing the habits of being open to the work of the Holy Spirit and developing a deeper relationship with God through living a balanced and good life. The cardinal virtues of practical wisdom (prudence), justice, fortitude and temperance help people develop habits of reason, fairness, emotional resilience and self-mastery. They are human virtues and, as such, are part of the development of people of all faiths or none as they learn how to flourish, thrive and to have a life supported by strong and caring relationships. The cardinal virtues are drawn from the teachings of Plato and Aristotle and are held in common with people of many faiths and secular beliefs. St. Thomas Aquinas attributes the theological virtues as having their foundation in God, they complete the cardinal virtues and are the way people can reach "the abundant life" (John 10:10).
- 5.2. "In the Catholic school... there is no separation between **time for learning** and **time for formation**. School subjects do not present only knowledge to be attained, but also **values to be acquired** and **truths to be discovered**. All of which demands an atmosphere characterised by the search for truth, in which competent, convinced and coherent educators, **teachers of learning and of life**, may be a reflection of the one Teacher." *Congregation of Catholic Education*.
- 5.3. At St Mary's we live out the Gospel values shared in the Beatitudes, throughout the life of school by adopting the Pupil Profile.

Pupils at St Mary's school are growing to be . . .

. . . grateful for their own gifts, for the gift of other people, and for the blessings of each day; and generous with their gifts, becoming men and women for others.

. . . attentive to their experience and to their vocation; and discerning about the choices they make and the effects of those choices.



- ... compassionate towards others, near and far, especially the less fortunate; and loving by their just actions and forgiving words.
 - ... faith-filled in their beliefs and hopeful for the future.
 - ... eloquent and truthful in what they say of themselves, the relations between people, and the world.
 - ... learned, finding God in all things; and wise in the ways they use their learning for the common good.
 - ... curious about everything; and active in their engagement with the world, changing what they can for the better.
 - ... intentional in the way they live and use the resources of the earth, guided by conscience; and prophetic in the example they set to others.
- 5.4. This is not a random set of virtues, nor is it a description of a generic ‘nice person’, but is a vision of a good and virtuous person rooted in the Ignatian tradition and, more deeply than that, in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is intended to offer a very practical model for forming and educating young people who grow to be more truly human, more fully alive, men and women for others for the greater glory of God and the common good.
- 5.5. Some of the virtues of the Pupil Profile are evidently linked more to the educational mission of the school (being curious and active, eloquent and truthful, so that you can be learned and wise) while others are more obviously to do with the formation of character and personality (being grateful and generous, attentive and discerning, compassionate and loving, faith-filled and hopeful, intentional and prophetic). The virtues of the profile weave and thread together and, taken together, envision what a well-rounded and well-educated, good and virtuous young person could be like: someone made in the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 1:26)

6. The Aim and Objectives of RSE

- 6.1. The aim of RSE is part of our aim to educate the complete human person. This is expressed in “Fit for Mission? Schools” (2009) as follows:

The fundamental needs of the human person are the focus of Catholic education – intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual, and eschatological (Our eternal destiny). These fundamental needs can only be truly fulfilled through a rich and living encounter with the deepest truths about God and the human person.

This is why Christ and His Gospel must be the foundation of the educational project of each school and college, because He is ‘the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection’ (Congregation for Catholic Education, The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School). Therefore, the Catholic school or college is called to keep the Gospel whole and alive amongst pupils, families, and staff.

- 6.2. RSE should therefore deepen the following areas of understanding:
- To develop self-knowledge, and respect and love of self;
 - To invite young people to develop and deepen a loving relationship with God;
 - To invite young people to understand that their life has a purpose;
 - To invite young people to develop and deepen relationships with each other based on mutual respect and care and to understand this is an expression of God’s love;
 - To foster an understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church about how to live a full life, a life of virtue, and the place of human sexuality in living a full life, marriage and parenthood that is appropriate to the stage of maturity of the young people;

- A strong awareness of their own safety and the nature of appropriate consent;
- To have an understanding of the law in England and Wales about Equality and Marriage, appropriate to age and maturity.

6.3. At St Mary's:

- We will seek to develop attitudes of awe and wonder for the gift and beauty of self, respect for each other as children of God and rejoice in the goodness of God's creation.
- We will teach children about the beauty of the Church's teaching about love and God's love for them which is shared in the Sacraments.
- We will sensitively share the Church's understanding of the nature of intimacy and the importance of marriage and family life as a way to live in loving relationships with others and with God.
- We will seek to develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity of all.
- We will seek to enable pupils to understand the choices they make and how those choices can help or harm themselves and others.
- We will encourage pupils to learn about expressing their own emotions and being respectful of the emotions and behaviour of others.
- We will encourage the whole school to be a loving family recognising God as merciful and generous.
- We will encourage everyone in the school to recognise their part in the school family and work together for reconciliation when relationships in the school falter.
- We will encourage everyone in the school to value humility, mercy and compassion and to respond with empathy to others.
- We will develop pupils' knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for managing their own risk.
- We will develop pupils' experience of what it is to be truly happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and gratification, satisfying the spirit rather than the senses.
- We will teach them the virtue of patience.
- We will teach pupils about the media and how to make good choices, about what to watch, what games to play, what rules apply, especially when using social media, and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.
- We will encourage pupils to develop a healthy, good moral framework about accessing information online.
- We will encourage pupils to recognise the influence of peer pressure and the moral integrity required to say "no".
- We will support pupils when relationships in their lives are challenging and teach them that there are people in school who will listen if they are experiencing changes that make them frightened or uncomfortable.
- We will teach pupils about the damage that drugs, alcohol and promiscuity do to relationships with the self, as well as others.

7. Inclusion

- 7.1. At St Mary's we identify that young people mature in different ways. Our teaching about relationships and sexuality is respectful of each child's starting point, their faith, culture and background. Lessons are framed by this understanding and young people are taught to respect each other in their differences, and develop an approach of dialogue.
- 7.2. We provide additional support through the school chaplain; the pupil support services, the school nurse and school counsellors.

8. Equality

- 8.1. The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that St Mary's endeavours to do its best for all of the pupils, irrespective of ability (physical and mental), race, ethnicity, nationality, maternity, pregnancy, sex, gender identity or orientation or whether they are looked after children.
- 8.2. See Equal opportunities policy.

9. Programme of study

- 9.1. The Province recommends appropriate resources to its family of schools. These range from ages 3-19 years and provide suggested areas of study and outcomes for the young people it serves. This programme will be taught in discreet lessons, in cross-curricular lessons, particularly RE and science and fundamentally embedded in the ethos of the school through assemblies, classroom discussions and the centring of all relationships in school on the person of Jesus Christ.
- 9.2. The programme of study is based on the understanding of the Church of human nature and human sexuality, and aims to help young people develop their sense of purpose and character. It should be taught as part of a broad and balanced curriculum and will thus allow children to express alternative viewpoints where they hold such views.
- 9.3. Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) will be delivered to all pupils, primarily through the Learning for Life programme of lessons. The school will deliver a programme for its RSE provision using the 'Ten Ten' Programme of study and other complementary materials. Some aspects will also be covered in the context of the RE curriculum, and other aspects will be delivered through the statutory requirements of the Science curriculum.

10. Parents

- 10.1. The Church recognises parents as the first educators of their children. Our schools exist to assist parents in this task, which includes RSE. The role of the school is thus that of assisting and completing (where needed) the work of parents, furnishing children and adolescents with an evaluation of "sexuality as value and task of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God". (Educational Guidance in Human Love (1983) Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education n69). Children's first experience of relationships and love are in the home. At our school, we seek to work with parents and support them as their children grow and begin to develop their own character as well as experiencing changes in their physical appearance.

- 10.2. In accordance with the Policy, it will be made clear to staff and pupils the limits of the teacher's role in exploring sensitive issues and that it is not appropriate, in a classroom setting, to provide advice on individual situations. If advice is sought by pupils, this should be handled by the schools' pastoral support and pupils will be encouraged to seek advice from their parents.
- 10.3. Parents have **the right to withdraw** their children from **some** elements of RSE. Should parents wish to withdraw their children they are asked to notify the school in writing before the day that the lesson is due to take place. (though they are not able to withdraw their children from statutory science lessons).
It is strongly advised that parents discuss their concerns with the headteacher before giving notice of withdrawal.
- 10.4. Any concerns raised by parents about the delivery of RSE will be dealt with sensitively with an appropriate member of staff available for consultation.
- 10.5. The school will involve and support parents in learning about RSE by the RSE coordinator who will provide and direct parents to information sessions
- 10.6. Some information about RSE is contained in the school's prospectus, and parents/carers will routinely be informed of additional guidance, training and information materials and may also be invited into school to discuss the content of RSE lessons.

11. Teaching RSE

- 11.1. The Head of RE is responsible for leadership, co-ordination and monitoring of the programme. Monitoring of RSE is undertaken by the SLT and the Safeguarding Committee of the governing body in accordance with other curriculum areas.
- 11.2. Staff will be supported in the delivery of the RSE Policy by other members of staff eg, Science and RE teachers, by senior leaders, and, where appropriate, by other professionals. To ensure the best delivery of this aspect of the curriculum, In-Service Education & Training (INSET) needs will be ascertained and made a priority. Other agencies will be used to support the teaching of RSE eg school nurse and the Police.
- 11.3. Such visitors will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at St Mary's and will agree to follow the instructions.
- 11.4. All staff are involved in fostering attitudes, living Gospel virtues and shaping behaviour based on a Christian understanding of how to lead a good life. Staff are called to be role models of the school's ethos in their relationships with other staff members, their conduct towards parents and their care for the children in the school. All Staff must conduct their behaviour in school in accordance with the vision and mission of the school.

12. Supporting children and young people deemed to be at risk

- 12.1. The governing body desires that RSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where pupils experience a growing appreciation for their well-being, and that of others, and a deeper understanding that the Church teaches a path of wholeness of mind, body and spirit. Like all other subjects, RSE always needs to be taught in a differentiated manner appropriate to the maturity of the children. It needs to be framed so that the young people who are participating know that there is pastoral support if any of the issues discussed make them feel the need to talk further or share confidential information. Part of this is creating an atmosphere where questions can be asked openly, knowing

that their questions will be answered and knowing that these questions will not be judged negatively by staff or other pupils. It is vital, therefore, that time is invested in creating this framework of mutual trust and care, whilst respecting personal information. The RSE coordinator must be given access to support and training to facilitate teachers to enable such discussions by creating carefully negotiated ground rules and distancing strategies.

12.2 The following guidance for dealing with questions in RSE will be adhered to:

Teachers should establish clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole class setting. Many teachers are concerned about responding to unexpected questions or comments from pupils in a whole-class situation. Having a set of ground rules should reduce the chances of this happening but teachers will need support and training so that they are prepared for the unexpected.

For example:

- *If a question is too personal, the teacher should remind the pupil of the ground rules. If the pupil needs further support, the teacher can refer her or him to the appropriate person, such as Head of Year, DSL, School Chaplains, school counsellor, school nurse, helpline, or an outside agency or service;*
- *If a teacher doesn't know the answer to a question, it is important to acknowledge this, and to suggest that the pupil or teacher or both together research the question later;*
- *If a question is too explicit, feels too old for a pupil, is inappropriate for the whole class, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should acknowledge it and promise to attend to it later on an individual basis. In this way, the pupil will feel they have been treated with respect, but the rest of the class will not have to listen to personal experience or inappropriate information. To maintain trust and respect the teacher must remember to talk with the pupil later; and*
- *If a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of sexual abuse, they should follow the school's child protection procedures.*

(DfE Sex and Relationships Guidance, 4.5 'Dealing with questions' 0116/2000)

12.3 Questions asked by pupils that are a cause for concern for the teacher, for example because of their explicit or graphic content, should be addressed in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and confidentiality procedures. The school will ensure that this policy is available for all staff, governors, parents and pupils and the confidential nature of how to obtain advice and guidance as a result of any issues or questions that may arise. Pupils will be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers about issues and questions that arise as part of the programme. It will be made clear to all that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where illegal or abusive concerns come to light and these will be dealt with under the terms of the relevant policies. (Safeguarding/child protection policy on the school website.)

Footnote: The use of 'Parent' also refers to a carer or legal guardians.

Appendices:

1. CES website: www.catholiceducation.org.uk
2. St Mary's R.C. High School website for policies > www.st-maryshigh.hereford.sch.uk
3. Archdiocese of Cardiff: <https://rcadc.org>
4. Government SRE guidance: Relationship's education, Relationships and Sex education RSE and Health Education:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>

