

# St. Mary's Primary School



## Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) Policy 2014

## **Rationale**

The SELB firmly advocates the Personal Development approach where young people are given the skills to help them resist peer and media pressure, and make informed decisions based on their own internal self respect and self esteem. Schools are centres of education and therefore they must accept the validity of the personal development approach rather than a service driven delivery.

## **Aim**

Relationships and sexuality is a major issue for our young people. There has been a disturbing rise in young people's sexual activity and the numbers of underage pregnancies as well as STIs, partly as a result of glamorous and contradictory messages from the media. Men and women are promoted as sexual objects and engaging in sexual activity appears to carry no responsibility or consequence. No consideration is given to the complex set of emotions and interactions required to sustain a healthy loving relationship.

This policy is intended to provide a framework through which young people can develop the skills, attitudes and values necessary to deal with the challenges which they will meet in this very sensitive area.

## **Objectives**

Through the delivery of RSE our young people should be able to :

- form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework
- examine and explore the various relationships in their personal lives
- learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect
- lay foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life
- make positive, responsible choices about themselves, others and the way they live their lives

## **Outcomes**

Desired outcomes are :

- enhanced self-awareness and self-esteem
- healthy and respectful friendships and relationships

- an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework
- responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- a sense of value for family life and marriage
- an appreciation of the responsibilities of parenthood
- appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth

## **Responding to sensitive issues**

We recognise that, on occasion, certain sensitive issues may require consideration. When attempting to deal with these issues the following procedures will be adopted :

- **Pregnancy**  
We aim to support any Young women who may become pregnant whilst enrolled at our school. Following consultation and agreement with the young mother to be, referral may be made to the SELB's SAM (School Age Mothers) Project.

In the event of a young woman informing the school that she is pregnant we will consider if child protection is an issue. Advice will initially be sought from the school's designated teacher for child protection and if it is deemed necessary the school will follow its child protection guidelines.

- **'Risky' Children**  
This term has been applied to children who display behaviours that may be harmful to other children. Whilst these children have a right to education the school has an obligation to ensure the well being of the entire school population. In order to do so we will carry out a risk assessment.
- **Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation**  
We are aware that as young people are growing up they can experience sexual identity and orientation confusion. This may be temporary for some while for others it may become clear with time that their orientation is homosexual. It is vitally important that all curricular delivery advocates abstinence as the acceptable option for all young people. 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 general school anti - bullying policy.

➤ **School absences for family planning issues**

Our school policy for permitting pupils to leave school during the school day will be applied to *all* requests. This includes requests for absences in relation to family planning issues. Parental permission will always be sought.

➤ **Child Protection**

If, for any reason, a young person is deemed to be at risk, then he/she will be informed that confidentiality must be breached, and the reasons for the breach. The young person will also be reassured that he/she will be supported throughout the process.

➤ **Role of Parents** -. The school will never attempt to assume the cloak of parental responsibility. Rather, we view parents as having prime decision making responsibilities. It is paramount that we work in partnership with parents, particularly in relation to these sensitive issues

➤ **Recording and Referral** - Clear and concise records will be kept pertaining to all issues outlined above.

## **Parental Partnership**

We recognise that parents have the prime responsibility for bringing up their children and we will therefore seek to ensure that our RSE programme complements and is supportive of the parents' role.

## **Related school policies**

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Personal Development Curriculum Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Misuse of Substances/Drugs Education Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- First Aid Policy

- Storage and Administration of Medication policy

## **Managing External Agencies (Appendices A and B)**

We acknowledge the importance of ensuring that any external agencies used to support our delivery of Personal Development must adhere to the values and ethos particular to our school. We ensure contracts are drawn up to inform all contributory parties

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This school recognises and accepts the importance of on-going monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the RSE programme.

To this end we follow the procedures for self evaluation as outlined in the DE document 'Together Towards improvement'

## Service Level Agreement for Use with External Agencies Working in Schools

I/We have read the school ethos and policies of \_\_\_\_\_ and

agree to formally adhere to their ethos and policies:

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

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

Senior 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 \_\_\_\_\_

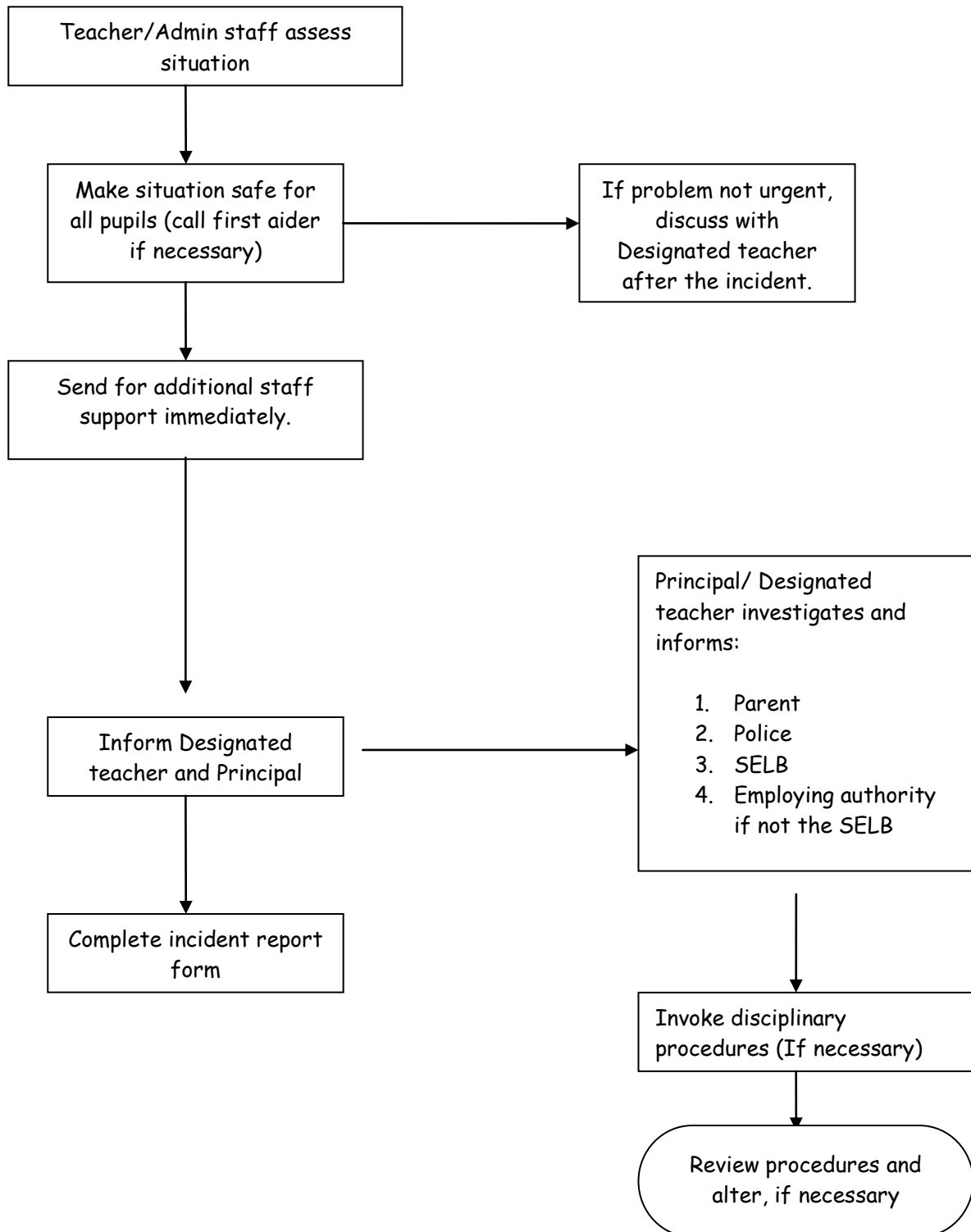


## Checklist for use of Schools Designated Child Protection Officer to vet External Agencies working in schools

- Accredited Body
- Copy of Mission Statement
- Personnel to be used: Police Check  
Official Qualification  
Key Person
- All statutory requirements fulfilled: i.e. Health and Safety Policy, etc.
- Sufficient Insurance
- Principal Informed and Approval Granted
- School Ethos read and understood
- Service Agreement completed and signed
- Evidence of current legislation
- Established format for feedback
- Evaluation process in place



## Misuse of Substance Flowchart



**Drugs and Substance Misuse Incident Report Form**  
**(Form to be completed by Teacher involved in Incident)**

Nature of Incident:

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Venue:

\_\_\_\_\_

Pupil(s) involved:

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Teacher Response:

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Substance given to Principal/Designated Teacher: Yes

NO

**Report to Designated Teacher:**

**Yes**

**NO**

**Report to Principal:**

**Yes**

**NO**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## School Record and Checklist

(To be completed and held as record by Principal / Designated Teacher)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Incident:

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Substance in secure storage: \_\_\_\_\_ (please tick)

Staff involved:

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Report from staff attached: \_\_\_\_\_ (please tick)

Name of Pupil(s) involved:

Year:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Informed (Circle as appropriate):

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) : \_\_\_\_\_
- Local CSIO : \_\_\_\_\_
- Board of Governors : \_\_\_\_\_
- SELB : \_\_\_\_\_
- Employing Authority if not SELB : \_\_\_\_\_

➤ **Other relevant bodies :**

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**Action plan for pupil support in place:**

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**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Principal/Designated Teacher**

## PRO FORMA TO INFORM SELB/EMPLOYING AUTHORITY

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Incident:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Substance (if identified): \_\_\_\_\_

I have completed the checklist outlined in Appendix E:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reference Materials

Area Child Protection Committees' Regional Policy and Procedures  
April 2005

Children (NI) Order 1995 'The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill 2000<sup>1</sup>

DE Circular 'Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)' 2001/15

DE Circular 'Drugs: Guidance for schools' 2004/9

DE Circular 'Pastoral Care in Schools' 1999/10

Drugs: Guidance for Schools in Northern Ireland

CCEA

2004 ISBN 1 85885 652 3

Evaluating Pastoral Care 1999

DENI

1999

Guidance for Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education

CCEA

2001 ISBN 1 85885 209 9

Guidance for Post Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education

CCEA

2001 ISBN 1 85885 209 9

Integrating Personal Safety Programmes into the Curriculum: Child Protection

CCEA

1999 ISBN 1 85885 202 1

Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection

DENI

1999

The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003

Together Towards Improvement: A Process for Self-Evaluation

Department of Education ETI

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 3; Article 12; Article 19

### **Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education**

In the *Revised Primary School Curriculum*, published by the Department of Education Northern Ireland, one of the areas of learning in the curriculum is *Personal Development and Mutual Understanding*. An integral part of the PDMU curriculum is the provision of *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)*. This current publication, which updates *Relationships and Sexuality Education in Catholic Schools (1997)*, outlines the context within which RSE takes place in a Catholic Primary School.

The Religious Education (RE) Programme in the Catholic Primary School seeks to help the children to grow and develop into healthy, mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings created in the image and likeness of God. One aspect of that growth is the development of the children's capacity to relate to others and to have a personal appreciation of their own sexuality. This is not seen as a separate element within the RE programme but is integrated throughout. This booklet includes material which outlines clearly where the RE programme in a Catholic Primary School deals explicitly with the topics outlined in the Department of Education's guidelines for RSE. The topics covered in the RE programme, both in the time devoted and in many respects in the material covered, are what is suggested in the RSE curriculum.



The ethos of a Catholic school is entirely concerned with fostering the development of relationships - the love of God and the love of every human being. These are the greatest commandments, "On these two commandments hang the whole law, and the Prophets too" (Mt. 22:40). In *Vision '08: A Vision for Catholic Education in Ireland* the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference summarised Catholic education as follows:

- Catholic education is inspired by Jesus Christ. It is person-centred, seeking to develop the full potential of each person.
- Catholic education proposes a sacramental view of reality, helping pupils to see God 'in the light of the Gospel and of human experience' (*Gaudium et Spes*, par. 46).
- Catholic education takes place in open, happy, stimulating and mutually respectful communities.
- Catholic education values intellectual and practical reason, promoting dialogue and understanding between faith, tradition, culture and heritage.
- Catholic education values tolerance and inclusiveness. Catholic schools welcome pupils of other traditions, faiths and none, seeing diversity as offering opportunities for deeper understanding among people holding diverse convictions.
- Catholic education seeks to enable pupils to act with integrity and justice, in pursuit of the common good in an imperfect world, and to act as stewards of creation.

#### *Executive Summary*

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 to the responsible, respectful and loving use of these gifts of God.

It is the responsibility of the principal in consultation with teachers and parents to initiate the process of developing an RSE policy for the

school. The policy should be agreed and endorsed by the Board of Governors. Catholic Primary Schools are strongly advised to have an agreed policy which has been communicated to parents prior to the delivery of an RSE programme. This policy should show clear linkages with the school's pastoral care policy. The policy should give guidance to teachers on how to approach moral and ethical issues relevant to RSE while taking the ethos of the school and the RE programme into account. The policy should also clearly outline the perceived roles of parents and the implementation and development of the RSE programme in relation to their child/children.

Everyone who is involved in the task of Relationships and Sexuality Education in a Catholic school should be guided by a number of basic principles.

1. The school should seek to communicate in policy and practice the Christian vision of human life and human relationships. This constitutes an education for love or as the Irish Bishops' Pastoral, *Love is for Life*, states..."It would be better to speak of "education for love", since the whole aim of a Christian and healthy sexuality is to put love, in its full and genuine meaning, into sexual relationships. Properly imparted, this knowledge can greatly help young people towards a mature and balanced and Christian understanding of sex."<sup>1</sup> This would include such fundamental ideas as the following:<sup>2</sup>

- The human body is sacred - the visible image of God.
- The human body shows us that we are mortal and limited - dependent on God who gives and sustains our life.
- Through our bodily nature we relate to other people in a physical world which we share. From this it follows that we are called to respect one another and to recognise in one another, "bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh" (Gen. 2:23).

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<sup>1</sup> Love is for Life – Section 53

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love* (1983), 22.

- The human body since it is sexual, expresses the call of men and women to reciprocal love which is a mutual gift of self: "In a society that tends more and more to relativise and trivialise the very experience of love and sexuality, exalting its fleeting aspects and obscuring its fundamental values, it is more urgent than ever to proclaim and bear witness that *the truth* of conjugal love and sexuality exist where there is a full and total gift of persons, with the characteristics of *unity* and *fidelity*."<sup>3</sup>
- Love and fruitfulness include and call for one another. In particular, married love - the only context which "aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul"<sup>4</sup> - is essentially oriented both to the loving unity of the couple and to cooperation with God in bringing new human life into the world. The values of love and life are seen most fully in the context of marriage and the family.<sup>5</sup>
- In Christian marriage, sexual union reflects the great mystery of the union of Christ and the Church. It becomes "an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves us".<sup>6</sup>
- "Sexuality touches the sources of human life. It concerns the family, the basic cell of the human community and the foundation of a stable society. Sex is not just a personal and private matter. It has a social and community aspect too."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005), 223

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), 1643.

<sup>5</sup> The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (337) - 'God who is love and who created man and woman for love has called them to love. By creating man and woman he called them to an intimate communion of life and of love in marriage: "So that they are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). God said to them in blessing "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28)'

<sup>6</sup> Irish Episcopal Conference, *Share the Good News* (2010), 56

<sup>7</sup> Love is for Life – No 7

- The presence of sin in ourselves and in the world makes these truths less easy to discern.

Any attempt to communicate 'the facts of life' as mere facts without reference to the religious and moral dimensions of human sexuality and without reference to the pupil's need to grow in maturity would be a distortion. Scientific facts are not the whole truth about human sexuality and reproduction. To allow children to become aware of the mere facts without being helped to see them in their rich human meaning would be to deprive them of the truth.

Quite apart from information about 'the facts of life', children should be taught from the beginning to recognise, at their own level, that sexuality is a gift of God. They should learn to appreciate that being a girl or being a boy is something for which they should be thankful to God. They should learn that human beings are created male and female in the image of God; sexual difference and complementarity are part of the variety of God's gifts.

2. The school must recognise that, in this area above all, its role is subsidiary to that of the parents.

The 1996 Vatican document, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, stresses the primacy of the role of the parents in the education of their children: "...any educative activity, related to education for love and carried out by persons outside the family, must be subject to the parents' acceptance of it and must be seen not as a substitute but as a support for their work."<sup>8</sup>

*The Department of Education Northern Ireland states in its Guidance for Primary Schools, Relationships and Sexuality Education document that "The effectiveness of an RSE policy and programme is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make."*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, 30

<sup>9</sup> *Guidance for Primary Schools, Relationships and Sexuality Education DENI 2001-15-2*

To put this principle into practice a number of principles need to be clearly stated:

- Because RSE is an integral part of both the RE curriculum in a Catholic Primary School and of the PDMU curriculum, schools are not required to ask parents to sign a permission slip to allow their child to attend lessons on the sensitive issues in RSE. However, it should be noted that best practice would advise that procedures exist where parents who wish to withdraw their children from RSE lessons containing sensitive issues can do so by submitting a written request to the school. The RSE Policy should include a procedure on how the opting out process can be best managed in the interests of the child.
- Many parents/guardians need encouragement and help in introducing sensitive topics to their sons and daughters at home. The school can play an important role in providing that help and encouragement through some or all of the following strategies:
  1. including parents fully in policy development
  2. making new parents aware of the RSE policy
  3. organising information evenings
  4. sending home the home/school links pages from the RSE Programme
  5. informing parents that they can look at copies of the RSE resource materials in the school.
- The presumption should be that the child is not hearing the names of sexual organs and information about human reproduction for the first time in the school. Prior discussion with the parents should aim at reaching a consensus about when the school may reasonably presume that such

information will have been communicated to the child at home. Parents, who are properly fulfilling their responsibility with regard to the sexual education of their child, should not find that the school has anticipated material which they had planned to communicate at a later date. The school should inform parents about the proposed schedule for these issues being raised in class so that it can be reasonably presumed that such information has been discussed at home.

- Some parents may decide that they would prefer to delegate, in whole or in part, the responsibility for dealing with these issues to their child's teachers. They should nevertheless inform themselves about what is being taught in school in order that they can cooperate with what the teachers are doing.
  
- In assessing the emotional and intellectual maturity of the pupils it must be borne in mind that very considerable differences exist even within the same class. Nothing should be dealt with in class unless the teacher is satisfied that every child in the class is ready for it. This raises particular difficulties in a school where teachers are teaching more than one class. In a two-teacher school, for instance, topics should not be raised with Year Sevens pupils while there are Year Five pupils in the same room for whom the lesson would not be suitable.
  
- The kind of maturity which a child requires in order to discuss intimate matters in the context of a loving relationship with his or her parents is one thing. A different and much higher level of maturity may be required before a child is ready for the discussion of such matters in the more public context of a classroom.

- There may be situations in which a teacher judges that some or all of the children are not ready for a classroom treatment of some issues. In such a case the teacher should not be afraid to set boundaries and to refer such issues to the parents.
3. The Catholic school, in the formulation of its policy, should reflect Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters. Even more fundamentally, it needs to be specific in excluding approaches which are inconsistent with the very foundations and formulations of Catholic moral thought.

Moral truth is not arrived at by consensus;

1. It is not the product of feelings or instinct
2. It is not arrived at simply by weighing up the likely consequences of various lines of action
3. It is not some arbitrary or legalistic imposition.
4. It is not just a matter of being sincere, so that what is right for one person may be wrong for another

All of these approaches can readily be identified in contemporary debates

In the first place the Catholic school will think in terms of moral truth. Sexual morality is about the meaning of human love. It is about how human relationships may be true to the full meaning and potential which they have been given by the Creator. The truth cannot be reached by means of feelings or instincts; it requires serious reflection about the meaning of human life and the dignity of the human person.

It is evident that, in dealing with profound human relationships, it is not enough to say that what is true for me may be false for you. Relationships are founded on communication. If what love, fidelity and respect mean to one person is not what they mean to another, any relationship between them will soon founder.

Sexual intimacy "would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving..."<sup>10</sup> Sexuality is a language and the meaning of that language is not something that we can invent or change:

*'By sexual union, a man and woman say to each other: "I love you. There is nobody else in all the world I love in the way I love you. I love you just for being you. I want you to become even more wonderful than you are. I want to share my life and my world with you. I want you to share your life and your world with me. I want us to build a new life together, a future together, which will be our future.... I will be faithful to you not just now but always. I will never let you down or walk out on you".'*<sup>11</sup>

In order to be faithful to the vision and ethos of a Catholic school, it is necessary that the following points should be borne in mind:

- The teacher will not attempt to build respect for the views of others on the false and fragile base of thinking that it does not much matter what one's view is, so long as it is sincere.
- Where fundamental disagreements have emerged about the right way to behave in particular situations, the discussion should not be ended by saying, 'what is right for one person may be wrong for another, so let's agree to differ'. What is right and wrong is not a mere matter of opinion. There are fundamental truths about relationships and sexuality.
- Pupils will be encouraged to look more deeply at an issue than simply to ask whether they feel good about it. What is right and what is wrong does not depend on how one feels. Students will be helped to understand human dignity in the light of Christ and to grasp the implications of that understanding for the way that people should relate to one another.

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<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981), 11.

<sup>11</sup> Irish Episcopal Conference, *Love is for Life* (1985), 9.



- To present morality as if it were just a matter of opinion or of feelings or of causing the least possible discomfort would be to teach an approach to morality which is incompatible with the Catholic moral tradition and which is corrosive of genuine relationships.
- Moral judgement is a matter of reason. It reflects the kind of beings we are, how we should behave in the light of our own dignity and the equal dignity of every other human being. No matter how one feels about it, no matter what other people tell us, no matter what good consequences may follow, if my action is unreasonable then it is immoral.
- The Catholic school will be careful to give a positive attitude towards the gift of sexuality by showing its important place in God's plan for human happiness. In Christian marriage, 'the physical intimacy of husband and wife become a sign and pledge of spiritual communion'. That sexual union is, and is intended by God to be, 'a source of joy and pleasure'.<sup>12</sup>
- The Catholic school will teach an appreciation of the sacrament of marriage as a memorial of the great works of God in history. "Christian marriage reflects the New Covenant between Christ and the Church, the Bride for whom he gave his life. As a commitment to love and to life, Christian marriage, blessed by God, builds up the ecclesial community and is deserving of its full support. Christian marriage is a true sacrament, signifying and communicating grace, echoing the faithful love of God".<sup>13</sup>

4. The dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child must always be respected.

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<sup>12</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2360, 2362

<sup>13</sup> *Share the Good News*, 56.

Care is necessary in relation to what is taught and when. It is also most important that the methods used should be appropriate. The pupil should never feel pressured to reveal or discuss private matters, nor to take part in forms of role-play or drama about which he or she feels a distaste or embarrassment. This is vital for two reasons:

1. It is not possible to teach the fundamental respect which is at the basis of every genuine relationship by methods which lack respect for one or more of the participants. The methods as well as the content must show the importance of sensitivity to the feelings of others, of courtesy, of self-restraint and of respect for the dignity and the privacy of other people. "The principle of 'fidelity to God and fidelity to man' leads to an avoidance of any opposition or artificial separation or presumed neutrality between method and content. It affirms, rather, their necessary correlation and interaction".<sup>14</sup>
2. It would risk being entirely counter-productive by generating negative attitudes and a distaste towards the gift and mystery of sexuality and might damage the pupil's capacity and willingness to discuss these issues freely and openly.

One must therefore be aware of a number of points:

- Children come from widely varying home and cultural backgrounds and have had very differing experiences. Teachers are well aware of the delicacy that is needed in dealing sensitively with issues that may be difficult for particular children. This sensitivity is obviously required especially in dealing with questions about relationships.
- A dynamic may arise in a group discussion which can place improper pressure on those involved who do not wish to

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<sup>14</sup> Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, (1998), 149

make disclosures: 'I have told you my worries and questions, why won't you tell me yours?'

- A child may easily be disturbed by being asked to participate in a discussion, role-play, or drama which he or she finds embarrassing or which presumes a level of maturity which the child does not yet possess.
- The materials used should not be such as to cause uneasiness to any of the pupils. It should be remembered that books and pictures which would be perfectly acceptable in the case of a child talking to a parent may be too explicit for classroom use.

In our time, children grow up in a world which no longer communicates respect for fundamental values in the area of sexuality. Nor do they find around them a consistent and positive understanding of human dignity. A feature of modern life can sometimes be the sexualisation of young people at an early age.<sup>15</sup> In this context there is need to be particularly attentive to the popularity of social networks, which offer dialogue and interactive forms of communication and relationships. Pope Benedict XVI, addressing young people for the twenty eight World Youth Day 2013, said they must "use these media wisely." He continued, "Be aware of the hidden dangers they contain, especially the risk of addiction, of confusing the real world with the virtual, and of replacing direct and personal encounters and dialogue with internet contacts."<sup>16</sup> Of special consequence are the following risks to the young in the use of the Internet: Inappropriate content, Cyber bullying and Predators. It is, therefore, necessary to help Catholic young people to a deeper Christian understanding of what it means to be human and of the meaning of human relationships. It is a necessary part of the vocation of their parents to share with them the Good News of human worth and dignity in

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<sup>15</sup> • 'Also troubling is the encouragement of fashion and self-consciousness about body-image even in young children' (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, Cherishing Life, par.12)

<sup>16</sup> Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the twenty-eighth World Youth Day 2013 No 4

the light of the Incarnation and of our redemption in Christ.<sup>17</sup> That sharing of the Good News with the present generation is also part of the calling of every Christian and of the whole community of Christ's followers.

What we seek to communicate to young people is good news. It is not primarily about fear or warnings about the dangers that await them but about reverence and wonder. We have to try to teach them that sexual intimacy is not something shallow and passing; it is not merely about self fulfilment; it is about full, faithful, permanent self-giving.

It is no accident that "when the family disintegrates through unbearable social pressures, or when its privileged status is diminished, then a move towards unacceptable individualism is inevitable, with increased fragmentation and an accompanying loss of social cohesion. The home is where we learn how to live with others, how to cope with diversity, how to limit our individual desires in the light of other people's needs. It is where we first learn the healing power of love and acceptance, how to cope with loss and hurt, where we learn the meaning of life and who we are. It is the first school of faith, the 'domestic Church', the 'imprint of divine love', the place where you can go, when no-one else will take you in. For all these reasons the family has a very valuable and irreplaceable role in Irish society".<sup>18</sup>

### **Criteria applying to visitors to Primary Schools involved in RSE**

When schools invite visitors into the school to enhance or supplement the PDMU curriculum precise criteria must apply.

- Such external facilitators/tutors must be approved in advance by the Principal and the Board of Governors.
- They must work under the guidance and supervision of the classroom teacher.
- All materials proposed for use must be approved in advance by the Principal and the Board of Governors, be age and stage appropriate for pupils and be in line with the ethos of the Catholic school, and

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<sup>17</sup> *Share the Good News*, 30.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2004/05/03/supporting-marriage-and-the-family/>

the principles of the SPHE curriculum. There is need also to take account of all relevant school policies and procedures including the schools child protection policy.

- It is strongly recommended that parents are consulted and made aware of any visitor and agency proposing to engage with pupils.

### **THE RSE CURRICULUM AND THE *ALIVE-O* SERIES**

The *Alive-O* programmes seek to help the children to grow and develop into healthy mature adults, capable of realising their full potential as human beings created in the image and likeness of God. One aspect of that growth is the development of the children's ability to relate to others and to have a positive understanding of their own sexuality. In the *Alive-O* catechetical series this is not seen as a separate element of the programme but is integrated throughout.