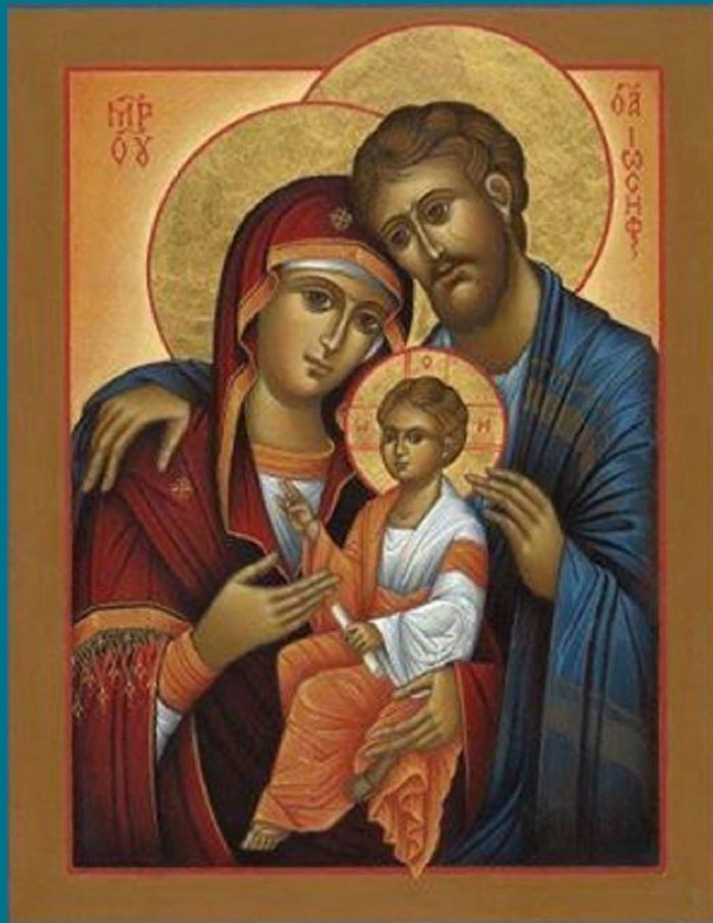


Relationships and Sexuality Education

Guidance Document for Primary Schools:
Northern Ireland (NI) 2021



Catholic Schools' Trustee Service

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Guidance Document for Primary Schools:
Northern Ireland (NI) 2021

Catholic Schools' Trustee Service

Acknowledgements

The Northern Bishops would like to thank the following people/groups for their expertise and advice in the development of this guidance.

Steering Committee

Fr. Timothy Bartlett, Secretary to the Northern Bishops
Mr Harry Casey, Executive Administrator of Commissions and Agencies, IEC
Miss Therese Ferry, Diocesan Advisor, Diocese of Derry
Mrs Eileen Gallagher, Diocesan Advisor (Post-Primary), Diocese of Clogher
Mrs Marian Hamill, Archdiocese of Armagh
Fr. Ryan McAleer, Diocesan Advisor (Primary), Archdiocese of Armagh
Fr. Eddie McGee, Diocese of Down and Connor, St Mary's University College
Ms Mary O'Boyle, Diocesan Advisor (Post-Primary), Diocese of Derry
Mrs Deirdre O' Rawe, Regional Director, Accord N.I.
Mrs Brenda Russell, Finance and Administration Officer, Accord N.I.

The Bishops would also like to thank representatives from the following organisations for their contributions to this guidance:

Ms Deidre Coffey, Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
Ms Sinead Cullen Mount Lourdes, Enniskillen
Ms Kate Liffey National Director for Catechetics,
Coordinator of the National Faith Development Team, Council for Catechetics
Mrs Claudine Marron, Diocesan Advisor (Primary) Diocese of Clogher
Mrs Susan Morgan, Diocesan Advisor (Post-Primary) Dromore Diocese
Ms Joanne O'Neill, St Michael's College, Enniskillen

CSTS

The Catholic Schools' Trustee Service is the sectoral body for the Catholic school trustees. CSTS is funded through Department of Education grant aid and trustee financial contributions.

FOREWORD

This document has been prepared for Boards of Governors, Principals and Teachers in Catholic Primary schools in their work in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). It seeks to provide guidance in two ways.

- Firstly, it outlines the rationale for the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in a Catholic school, guiding principles underpinning a Catholic school's RSE provision and contextual background for the delivery of RSE in a Catholic school. In this way, the guidance document serves to provide important discussion material for those involved in the development or re-development of the school's RSE policy.
- Secondly, this guidance document seeks to assist Catholic schools in the area of RSE by providing important information and practical guidance for the school's work on the development of its own RSE policy. Every school, including Catholic schools, is required to have an updated RSE policy. This document provides schools with key signposts in this important work.

This guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education should be read in conjunction with the *Department of Education NI (DENI)* Circular 2015/21 and the non-statutory guidance from the *Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment* (CCEA) published in 2015.



CONTENTS

| | |
|---|--|
| Foreword | 3 |
| Contents | 4 |
| SECTION A | TEACHING RSE IN A CATHOLIC SCHOOL |
| Rationale for Teaching RSE in a Catholic School | 6 |
| RSE and the Characteristic Spirit of a Catholic School | 6 |
| A Holistic Vision of Education | 6 |
| The Dignity of the Human Person | 7 |
| RSE as a Whole School Enterprise | 7 |
| Teaching RSE within a Moral and Ethical Framework | 8 |
| RSE and the Central Role of Parents and Carers | 9 |
| Child-Centred and Age Appropriate Approach to Academic and Pastoral Provision | 10 |
| Summary | 10 |
| Legislative Context and the (Revised) Northern Ireland Curriculum | 11 |
| The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) | 11 |
| Northern Ireland RSE Curriculum | 11 |
| Department of Education NI Policy and Guidelines | 12 |
| Relevant Legislation, Policy and Guidance | 12 |
| SECTION B | DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL RSE POLICY |
| Relationships and Sexuality Education Exemplar Policy Framework | 15 |
| Background Information and School Mission Statement / Ethos | 15 |
| Policy Formation and Consultation Process | 16 |
| Dissemination | 16 |
| Definition and Rationale for the Delivery of RSE | 17 |
| The centrality of Virtue | 19 |
| Aims, Objectives and Skills | 19 |
| Inclusion and Special Education Needs (SEN) | 21 |
| RSE Curriculum | 22 |
| Assessment of RSE | 24 |
| Use of Outside Agencies | 24 |
| Parents and Carers | 24 |
| Ensuring the Curriculum is Balanced | 25 |
| Responsibility for Teaching the Programme | 26 |
| Other Roles and Responsibilities | 26 |
| Relationship to other Policies and other Curriculum Subjects | 28 |
| Responding to Pupil's Questions and Sensitive Areas | 28 |
| Supporting Children and Young People at Risk | 30 |
| Monitoring and Evaluation | 31 |
| Staff Development and Training | 32 |
| Withdrawal from RSE | 32 |
| Possible Appendices | 32 |
| Appendices | 34 |
| Appendix 1 | Statutory Curricular Requirements for PDMU - RSE |
| Living-Learning-Together | 36 |
| Appendix 2 | Sample Service Level Agreement for External Agencies |
| Appendix 3 | Sample Information Letter to Parents |
| | 39 |

A top-down view of a child's hands in a red sweater drawing on a light-colored table. The table is covered with various art supplies including pencils, pens, markers, and small wooden toys like a green cone and a yellow bird. The child is drawing a simple line drawing of a face with a circular outline and some internal lines. The background is a warm, orange-toned surface.

SECTION A

Teaching RSE in a Catholic School

This section outlines the rationale for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in a Catholic school, guiding principles underpinning a Catholic school's RSE provision and contextual background for the delivery of RSE in a Catholic school.

Rationale for Teaching RSE in a Catholic School

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a complex and vitally important area of a school's curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality Education is defined as a lifelong process encompassing:

- the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills; and
- the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.¹

RSE and the Characteristic Spirit of a Catholic School

In a Catholic school, RSE provision should primarily be understood and delivered within the wider context of the characteristic spirit or ethos of the school.²

The Department of Education, reiterating previous legislation and policy,³ affirms this same principle when it emphasises the need for the values inherent in the school's RSE programme to be consistent with the core values and ethos of the school:

RSE is an integral part of the revised curriculum in both primary and post-primary schools and must be delivered in a sensitive manner which is appropriate to the age and understanding of pupils and the ethos of the school.⁴

The Catholic school shares its vision of the human person in relationship with others by how it lives out important values like inclusion, respect, and care. Schools should be places where everyone is valued and their innate dignity respected, and where those struggling to find themselves are accompanied and supported.⁵

A Holistic Vision of Education

The Catholic school dedicates itself to the education of the whole human person, leading to a mature integration of the moral, physical, spiritual, religious and emotional dimensions of the individual.⁶

The specific task of RSE in a Catholic school is to teach, nurture, advise, guide and enable young people in the school's care to recognise their own sacredness and the sacredness of others within the context of Catholic faith and teaching. Jesus is the model for living an ethical life, and the moral teachings of the Church enable us to follow Him who is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life'. (Jn 14:6)

1 CCEA RSE Guidance for Post-Primary Schools, 2015, Section 1, 4.

2 Congregation for Catholic Education, Declaration on Catholic Education, Gravissimum Educationis, 1965 para 1, DENI Guidance Circular 2013/16.

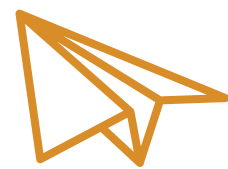
3 See DENI Guidance Circular 1986/45. DENI Circular 2013/16 also states that Relationships and Sexuality Education 'should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parent(s) carer(s) and school management authorities'.

4 DENI Guidance Circular 2013/16, para 2.

5 Pope Francis in Amoris Laetitia speaks of the need for sexuality to be 'seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving', 2016, para 280.

6 Pope Saint John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, 1981, para. 37.

The Dignity of the Human Person



At the heart of Relationships and Sexuality teaching is an understanding that:

- Human sexuality is an integral part of the human person and that it determines in a significant way our capacity to give and receive love
- Human life is sacred
- Each person is a unique human being created in the image and likeness of God.

Created in the image and likeness of God, the Christian vision of anthropology presents human sexuality as a fundamental component of one's personhood. Human sexuality plays an integral part in the development of an individual's personality and in the process of education: "In fact, it is from [their] sex that the human person receives the characteristics which, on the biological, psychological and spiritual levels, make that person a man or a woman, and thereby largely condition his or her progress towards maturity and insertion into society"⁷

The dignity of the human person is foundational to the pastoral care of children within schools. Human dignity, and the inherent respect that should be shown to every individual, originates from God. Every person has an inalienable and inherent dignity because they are all made in the image and likeness of God. Any behaviour which undermines someone's dignity is completely unacceptable and must be challenged in the context of a Christian community. Catholic schools should be havens of respect and guardians of the true dignity of each human being. Any form of marginalisation, harassment, bullying and/or discrimination of children on grounds of race, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation is not consistent with the Christian vision of the human person as a child of God.⁸

Pope Francis in *Gaudete et Exsultate* encapsulates this when he says:

We need to remind young people that they are children of God and that they are all called to be holy by living lives with love and by bearing witness in everything they do, and wherever they find ourselves. In the call to holiness God speaks to each person and says, 'Be holy, for I am holy' (Lev 11:44: 1 Pet 1:16). The relationships and sexuality education programme helps young people to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others.⁹

RSE as a Whole School Enterprise

A Catholic school is a community inspired by Gospel values that seeks to transmit these rich values. It is the whole school community, in a myriad of different ways, that educates and forms pupils for relationships with self, with others, with our created world, and with God. Therefore, community is at the heart of a school's provision of RSE.

⁷ Congregation for The Doctrine of The Faith, *Persona Humana*, Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, 29 December 1975, 1.

⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Male and Female He Created Them*, 2019, para 16. This document proposes 'the need to educate young children and young people to respect every person in their particularity and difference so that no one should suffer bullying, violence, insults or unjust discrimination based on their specific characteristics.

⁹ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 2018, para 10, 14, 33.

The Catholic school should have a particular care for those within its own community that are most vulnerable, who are struggling in any area of their lives. In such a school, there is no place for bullying, harassment, racism or homophobia, or any form of victimisation. In particular, it is also important that Catholic schools also evaluate the support offered to pupils who are facing new and deep questions relating to their sexual identity as they mature. These pupils are loved unconditionally by God and therefore should be loved in their schools.

In turn, Catholic schools seek to imbue confidence and respect in all of their pupils so that these pupils throughout their lives will have the skills and disposition to relate with others in a way that is respectful and that brings joy to their own lives and to the lives of others.

In 2018 Archbishop Eamon Martin in his keynote address to the Association of Management of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS) described how the school becomes part of the 'extended family' for each of the pupils:

You will journey with these young people through some of their most formative years, as they develop physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually; you will help them relate to the world and explore the great questions of today; you will guide them as they begin to form their personal attitudes and values, setting down for themselves principles and foundations for life; you will comfort and encourage them as they learn to cope with the complexity of relationships, and as they discover who they are as a person.¹⁰

Teaching RSE within a Moral and Ethical Framework

A Catholic school's RSE policy should provide clear guidance on the moral and ethical framework within which the programme will be taught and RSE programmes should give pupils opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they affect them and others.

All RSE programmes are inherently value-based and reflect a particular understanding of human sexuality and human relationships.¹¹ RSE in a Catholic school invites pupils to engage with a vision of life inspired by the values of the Gospel that are challenging, consoling, and inspiring and that speak to the hearts and minds of pupils on their journey.

Archbishop Eamon Martin has stated that,

Relationships and Sexuality Education in Catholic schools is situated within a moral and values framework that is derived ultimately from the life and the teaching of Christ and transmitted through the teaching of the Catholic Church..... Relationships and Sexuality Education ought therefore to be an integral part of the curriculum in a Catholic school. It should present the positive, yet challenging Catholic vision for relationships, chastity, marriage and the family - the belief that human life is sacred, that each person is created in the image and likeness of God, that the self-giving love and commitment in the marriage of a man and a woman is open to life, that chastity is achievable, healthy and good for our young people.¹²

¹⁰ Archbishop Eamon Martin, AMCSS Keynote Address, 2018.

¹¹ DENI Circular 2001/15.

¹² Archbishop Eamon Martin, AMCSS Keynote Address, 2018.

A values-based approach seeks to be invitational.¹³ RSE seeks to invite pupils to dialogically engage deeply with key questions as they relate to their own lives. In a Catholic school this will mean providing space for young people to encounter and engage with the Gospel's rich understanding of the human person and of life.

Everything that the Church teaches about human sexuality and relationships, it teaches out of a sincere desire to share something beautiful about the nature of the human person. For example, it is precisely because of our inherent dignity that the Church teaches the value of human life from conception to natural death. In a Catholic school it is these values that will be respectfully proposed to young people, while listening and being attentive to their lived experiences.

RSE and the Central Role of Parents and Carers

Church teaching constantly affirms that the family is the primary place for relationships and sexuality education to take place.¹⁴ Parents / carers are the first, and most important educators of their children.¹⁵ The role of the Catholic school is to support and complement this role through partnership with those with parental responsibility.

Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* develops this premise further when he says,

The overall education of children is a 'most serious duty' and at the same time a 'primary right' of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them.¹⁶

It follows that parents have a key role in education concerning relationships and sexuality. Schools have a responsibility to be supportive of the efforts of parents and their concerns for the health, safety, security and well-being of their children.

Consultation with parents is indispensable to the effective delivery of the school's RSE programme. Having parents involved in the development of the school's RSE policy, including the monitoring and evaluation of the programme is therefore essential.

In addition, parents are most immediately involved in engaging with RSE related learning with their child or children in their own homes. Often the work carried out through the RSE Programme in a school affords parents the opportunity to begin discussions with their children that they might otherwise struggle with. Ways in which the parent can be connected back into his/her child or children's learning in the area of RSE should therefore be actively sought.



13 Congregation for Catholic Education, *Male and Female He Created Them*, 2019, para 4. This document outlines an invitational methodology to listen, to reason and to propose in order to meet the needs of the individual and communities.

14 Pope Saint John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 1981, para 36.

15 Declaration on Catholic Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965 para 3, Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 1995, para 5.

16 Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), 2016, para 84.

Child-Centred and Age Appropriate Approach to Academic and Pastoral Provision

Schools should adopt a child-centred approach to the delivery of RSE and the pastoral care of young people. The safeguarding and welfare of all children is paramount. In working to create an inclusive environment for all children and young people, schools need to ensure that each young person is protected and supported in a way which not only affirms individual uniqueness but also balances this with the equal rights of other young people. The priority of the school is to create a safe environment in which the vulnerable child can receive the support that they require. The delivery of RSE should be tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of the young people.

RSE programmes should aim to present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner set within a clear framework of Christian values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. Pupils should be encouraged to appreciate the value of marriage and family, permanent loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood. They should be helped to consider the importance of self-restraint, dignity, respect for themselves and others, loyalty and fidelity.

Teachers responsible for delivering the programme should however acknowledge that many young people come from backgrounds that do not reflect such values and experiences. Sensitivity is therefore needed to avoid causing hurt and offence to them and their families and to encourage the development of their sense of worth.

Summary

In summary, it is worth noting the guiding principles offered by the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference in its publication *Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education* (2014). They are:

- 1 The school should seek to communicate in policy and practice the Christian vision of human life and human relationships.
- 2 The school should recognise its role in this area as subsidiary to that of the parents.
- 3 The Catholic school, in formulation of its policy, should reflect Catholic moral teaching on sexual matters.
- 4 The dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child must always be respected.



Legislative Context and the (Revised) Northern Ireland Curriculum

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC (1989) states in Articles 28 & 29 that children and young people are entitled to good quality education while at the same time acknowledging (Article 24e) that parents have the right to 'access education' for their children.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Protocol 1, Article 2 of the Right to Education states,

No person shall be denied a right to an education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure that such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Northern Ireland RSE Curriculum

Since September 2007, the (revised) Northern Ireland Curriculum in all grant-aided schools as required under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, establishes Relationships and Sexuality Education as a statutory component of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding.¹⁷

In 2015, the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), supporting the delivery of the NI curriculum, provided non-statutory guidance for schools on delivering PDMU which includes information on Relationships and Sexuality Education. This material is available from their website at www.ccea.org.uk.

In this 2015 'Relationships & Sexuality Education Guidance' CCEA stated that:

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. Relationships and Sexuality Education is firmly grounded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, where the central focus is on the emotional development of children, health and safety, relationships with others, and the development of moral thinking, values and actions.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Appendix 1: Statutory Curricular Requirements for PDMU / RSE.

¹⁸ Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), Relationships & Sexuality Education Guidance, An update for Primary Schools, 2015. Section I

Department of Education NI Policy and Guidelines

The Department of Education policies, *Every School a Good School* (2009) and *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education* (CRED) 2011, outline how each school should provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment with an inherent respect for difference and the diversity of family life in today's society.

Issued by the Department of Education in June 2013, DENI Circular 2013/16 reminded schools that RSE is an integral part of the revised curriculum in both primary and post primary schools. The policy recognises the importance of RSE in the development of young people and states that it must prepare them to view relationships in a responsible and healthy manner and should be taught within the ethos of the school.

This circular also points out that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.¹⁹ More recently, DENI Circular 2015/21 and CCEA (2015) provided specific guidance for schools in the preparation of the RSE policy.

Relevant Legislation, Policy and Guidance (Chronological Order)

Congregation for Catholic Education (1965), Declaration on Catholic Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1975) Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, *Persona Humana*

Pope John Paul II, (1981) Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio: On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*

DENI Circular 1986/45 - 'Sex Education'

United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989) Articles 12, 18, 19, 28 and 29

DENI Circular 2001/15 - 'Relationships and Sexuality Education'

CCEA (2001) "Guidance for Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education "

The Education Order (NI) 2006

DENI (2009) '*Every School a Good School*'

¹⁹ See also DENI Circular 2010/01.

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2009) *Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in Northern Ireland, A Short Guide - Education*

DENI Circular 2010/01 - 'Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education'

DENI (2011) 'Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy'

DENI Circular 2013/16 - 'Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools'

CCMS Circular 2013/19 - 'Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education'

DENI Circular 2014/01 - 'Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)'

DENI Circular 2015/21 - 'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance'

CCEA (2015) 'Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary Schools'

Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (2015) 'Sexting and the Law' (A Basic Guide to Help Professionals and the Public Deal with Incidents of 'Sexting')

ETI (2016) An evaluation of RSE in Primary and special Schools

Pope Francis (2016), Apostolic Exhortation - *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love)

DENI Circular 2016/05 - 'Children Who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour'

DENI Circular 2017/04 - 'Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools'

Pope Francis (2018), Apostolic Exhortation - *Gaudete et Exsultate* (The Call to Holiness)

Congregation for Catholic Education (2019), *Male and Female He Created Them - Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*

SECTION B

Developing the School RSE Policy

This section outlines what a school should include in its RSE policy. This is in line with the overall guidance provided by the Department of Education NI for schools as they develop RSE policy documents. Also included are important markers for a Catholic Primary School to consider in the development of the school's RSE policy. Schools may sometimes quote directly from this exemplar policy but should customise it to suit their own particular circumstances.

Relationships and Sexuality Education Exemplar Policy Framework

Background Information and School Mission Statement / Ethos

The initial background information required on school policies for RSE is as follows:

- **Name of school, address, phone number**
- **Date of Policy**
- **School Mission Statement / Ethos**

In line with DENI guidelines for the development of an RSE policy, **a full Rationale for RSE should be provided in line with the ethos of the school.** The material in **Section A of this guidance document** could be used to stimulate dialogue and discussion as the policy is being developed with partners; parents, teachers, pupils and others. All policies should be informed by the school's mission statement, overall aims and objectives.

The school's Mission Statement is...

The school's aims and objectives are...

e.g.

We (insert full name of school) 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

Policy Formation and Consultation Process:

All stakeholders should be consulted who have particular responsibilities in the formulation of the school's RSE policy, including parents and pupils.

Who was consulted?

How were people consulted?

What does this policy cover?

Who produced it?

Describe any consultation that has taken place e.g.

- pupil focus groups / school council
- questionnaires to parents / carers, any meetings etc.
- review of RSE curriculum content with staff and pupils
- consultation with wider school community e.g. school nurse
- consultation with school governors

How and when will the policy be reviewed?

The intentions of this policy are...

It was produced by...

Through consultation with...

It will be reviewed in...

e.g. Implementation and Review of Policy

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Board of Governors in the term 20____.

This policy will be reviewed every year/2 years by the RSE Co-ordinator, the Board of Governors and Staff. The next review date is _____.

Dissemination

When the finalised draft policy has been ratified by the Board of Governors, it becomes the school's agreed RSE policy. It should then be circulated within the school community. The entire staff should be familiar with the policy and aware of any changes required in curriculum delivery.

The Link Governor for RE/RSE/PDMU/Safeguarding in conjunction with the co-ordinators for these areas should address the Board of Governors and keep them fully informed.

Some schools may invite the Co-ordinator of RSE to address the Board of Governors and keep them fully informed. Policy development session/s will ensure that a whole school policy

is developed and owned by the entire staff. The Co-ordinator is responsible for ensuring whole school ownership of RSE.

How will the policy be disseminated?

How will governors, teachers, non-teaching members of staff and parents be informed about and have access to this policy?

Who will receive it and where it can be accessed?

Parents/carers and pupils should be made aware of the school's policy from the time of enrolment of the pupil (See **Appendix 3 – Sample Letter to P7 Parents**). A contact person should be named in the policy to allow for comments and feedback on the policy.

The named stakeholders will be informed about this policy through...

The policy will be made available to them through...

The policy should be on the school website

e.g. The draft policy will be given to all members of the Board of Governors, and all teaching and non-teaching members of staff. Copies of the document will be available to all parents through the school's prospectus and a copy is available in the school office. Details of the content of the RSE curriculum will also be published on the school's web site.

Definition and Rationale for the Delivery of RSE

The Definition and Rationale for the Delivery of RSE should link across to guidance from the Church (**See Section A**) and any diocesan guidelines regarding the educational and theological reasons for a Catholic school undertaking RSE as well as relevant DENI or CCEA guidelines and documentation.

We define RSE as...

We consider that it includes...

We believe RSE needs to be addressed because...

What are we required to teach by law? (It is important for different audiences to understand that aspects of RSE are a statutory entitlement under PDMU).

We are statutorily required to teach...



See Section A of this Guidance Document for the Rationale and Key Principles guiding the delivery of RSE in Catholic Schools

e.g.

DEFINING RSE

RSE is life long 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 should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend.

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 PDMU 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

What virtues and values underpin the school's work in RSE and why? How do these link to the school's overall values?

What does this mean in the Catholic context of your school and your community?

RSE in our school acknowledges the centrality of the following values and virtues...

e.g.

Children will be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:

- A respect for God and creation.
- To be able to distinguish between what is right and wrong.
- A respect for self.
- A respect for others.
- Self-discipline.
- A responsibility for one's own actions and an understanding of the long term and short-term consequences of their actions.
- Non-exploitation in relationships.
- Commitment, trust and bonding within relationships.
- A development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others.
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life.

Aims, Objectives and Skills

Specific aims and objectives will be relevant and should be developed for each year of the RSE programme. Material covered will be done so at an agreed and appropriate age and stage, taking guidance from the DENI guidelines for RSE Primary and the PDMU and Religious Education Curricula. These aims, objectives and key skills should also be understood in the context of the school's wider provision for wellbeing in terms of cross-curricular and whole school engagement and support.

What is the school aiming to achieve through RSE provision and how does this relate to the school's Mission Statement, school aims, and the wider curriculum?

Our programme aims to...

It will develop the following aims, objectives and skills:

e.g.

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our school aims state that we will endeavour to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we commit ourselves:

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

Aims of RSE

A school's RSE policy might include some or all of the following aims. In line with the school's ethos and CCEA guidelines the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy of a Catholic school aims to:

- promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework
- help all pupils to appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God
- enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God and that love is the central basis of all relationships
- enable children to form healthy and respectful friendships and relationships.
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- To foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To foster and develop mutual respect and understanding.
- To develop a respect for difference, gender and race within the school and community.
- To enable the children to identify and manage a range of feelings.
- To help all children to value family life in its diversity and the gift of marriage.
- To help young people recognise, understand and prepare for the body changes that they (and their friends) will undergo in the years ahead (puberty).
- promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed

Objectives of RSE

In line with the school's ethos and CCEA guidelines, the Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum attempts to enable pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- Develop an awareness of the diversity of family life and family patterns.

- Use decision making and problem-solving strategies.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Discuss their feelings, growth and development using an appropriate vocabulary.
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse (inappropriate behaviours, sexual abuse and exploitation).

Skills Promoted (including personal and social)

Pupils will develop:

- **Communication skills** - Listening to other's points of view, putting one's own view forward, dealing with conflict peacefully and being assertive.
- **Decision making skills** - Making good choices with the relevant information at hand, making moral judgments wisely in contexts and then putting them into practice, acting responsibly as an individual or as a member of a group.
- **Interpersonal skills** - Managing healthy relationships with confidence and with effectiveness.

Inclusion and Special Education Needs (SEN)

In a Catholic school that seeks to honour individuals' giftedness and be inclusive, it is essential that a school's RSE policy attends to those pupils with special education needs.

The Church affirms the right of every individual to be treated equally. All pupils, male and female have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, regardless of their age, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion or social class.

Schools must ensure that young people with SEN in mainstream schools have appropriate, accessible and relevant Relationships and Sexuality Education. Schools may need to engage in the careful planning and adapting of resources and teaching activities to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN compared to their peers.

It is particularly important that schools 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/carers to reinforce learning at home.

It is widely recognised that pupils with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Teachers must try to ensure that they develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of pupils 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.

It is important therefore that each school takes cognizance of minority groups within their particular school. Employing a range of appropriate strategies which enable quality teaching to occur is central to inclusive practice and should include:

- differentiation strategies
- co-operative learning strategies
- classroom management strategies and
- the use of new technology.

e.g.

“We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to pupils’ different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances; for example, their own sexual orientation, faith or culture and is taught in a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination. Lessons will also help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.”

RSE Curriculum

Details for each of the year’s provision for RSE should be provided in terms of general content to be covered and the materials to be used. (See Appendix 1)

It is essential that a school audit is carried out to ensure consistency of approach and establish when and where aspects of the RSE programme are being delivered. Lessons and resources developed should be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils to which they are delivered. It is important that teachers delivering the programmes do so with sensitivity and care. They should also consider pupils’ knowledge, attitudes and beliefs and their capacity to understand issues. Special attention should be paid to young people with special educational needs where physical development may outstrip emotional maturity to ensure that programmes are delivered effectively.

In broad terms what content will be covered and when?

Timetabling

Is RSE timetabled?

Will boys/girls be taught together for all aspects of RSE?

Class organisation

Classroom teaching arrangements such as single gender class or mixed gender class will have to be at the discretion of the individual school. It is important that within the RSE programmes, activities are included to allow young people to talk about their interests, concerns and feelings. If boys/girls have respect for themselves then ultimately, they will have respect for others. It may be appropriate to facilitate the delivery of specific topics of the RSE programme to boys/girls in single gender groups.

E.g. “In _____ the Class Teacher provides a talk for the Y.6 and Y.7 pupils in single gender groups. The activities complement the RSE curriculum. Pupils are prepared for the class and parental permission is received. The session is informal and follow-up activities are undertaken by the class teacher.”

Resources used are...

Schools should review and quality-assure all the resources chosen before the pupils use them to ensure that they are inclusive and consistent with the school's moral and value framework. All new RSE programmes, either developed within the school or presented by external agencies, should be brought to the attention of the Diocesan Advisor for review and accreditation.

RSE Teaching Resources should:

- Reflect the ethos of the School
- Be age-appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences; and
- Be factually accurate, up-to-date and make clear distinctions between fact and opinion.

Inappropriate images should not be used under any circumstances and schools must ensure that they protect pupils from accessing unsuitable material on the internet. Schools should inform parents or carers about any materials that pupils will be exposed to, particularly if these are of a sensitive nature.²⁰

e.g.

RSE Resources / Programmes Used:

- 'Grow in Love' Catechetical Series (P1-P7). (Veritas)
- 'In the Beginning' RSE Primary School Programme (St Edward's PS, Oldham)
- 'The Wonder of My Being RSE Programme' (Down and Connor Diocese)
- Living Learning Together: PDMU Programme (CCEA)
- 'Roots of Empathy' Programme
- 'Inside Out' P6/P7 RSE Programme (Provided by the 'Love for Life' Organisation)

Teaching strategies will include...

Teaching methods which involve pupils actively in the process of their own learning is most beneficial.

Specifically, in terms of organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual pupil 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.

e.g. "In the light of the RSE Policy, and in the context of the ethos of the Catholic school, the statutory requirements for RSE are taught through the religious education programme Grow in Love and, while linking with the significant and relevant areas of the curriculum such as PDMU and Safeguarding. Teachers will cover themes in Circle Time, RE and PDMU. We encourage active learning strategies e.g. mind mapping, discussion techniques, reporting back, listening exercises, circle time, role-play, questionnaires and quizzes."

Assessment of RSE

We will assess pupils' learning through...

e.g.

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.

Use of Outside Agencies ²¹

Where appropriate, the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals may be accessed. Where this occurs, the school should be satisfied that contribution 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/RSE co-ordinator.

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 RSE co-ordinator 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 2**) 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 pupil feedback to inform future planning and provision along with any evaluation carried out by the outside agency/individual.

Parents and Carers

It is important that a school actively promotes the implementation of RSE and that parents/carers are fully informed of the content, timing and the delivery of the 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 could be achieved by sending an outline of programme home either

(a) at the beginning of school year, or

(b) just prior to the commencement of the programme

Face to Face Meetings

Meeting parents either at the beginning of the school year or prior to the commencement of the programme to inform them of their rights and responsibilities. This meeting will allow the parent 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.

School Website

Publishing the RSE policy in its entirety on the school website and making it available for parents/carers to download.

Ensuring the Curriculum is Balanced

Providing a programme that offers a range of viewpoints, teaches clear scientific information and covers aspects of the law pertaining to RSE, is not incompatible with the school's promotion of Catholic teaching. Pupils need access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals.

e.g.

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. 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.

21 See the criteria established on the use of external agencies as outlined in CCMS Circular 2013/19 Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education, 13 and CCEA RSE Guidance for Primary Schools, 2015.

Responsibility for Teaching the Programme

The programme will be led by...
It will be taught by...
It will be supported by...

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..²²

Principal and Senior Management 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 Principal to support the work of the Principal and if a VP is charged with responsibility for RSE it is her/his responsibility to ensure that RSE is delivered in a way which is in keeping with the ethos of the school.

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

22 DENI Circular 2001/15 - Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in Schools.

RSE Co-ordinator

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.

Designated Teacher/Special Needs Co-ordinator

The Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator will provide relevant information which will ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

Chaplain

The role of the chaplain is to:

- support the teaching of RSE where possible;
- meet with the RSE 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
- Confidentiality Policy
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- Pastoral Care Programme
- Health Education
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- Internet Safety Policy/E-safety Policy
- World Around Us
- PDMU
- Homework Policy
- Use of outside agencies and vetting arrangements.

Responding to Pupil's 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.

A school's RSE policy and approach to teaching and learning must, of course be sensitive to specific issues that arise in the life of pupils and in the overall life of the school. Some of those sensitive issues are outlined below to provide schools with guidance in terms of the formulation of policy and the delivery of programmes.

Schools should 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, the school, adopting an invitational approach, should not avoid teaching what it is that the Church professes.

Boundary Setting

It is essential to set parameters for the teaching of sensitive issues. Having an agreed Code of Conduct will ensure that the right to privacy for both pupil and teacher is always respected. In terms of such a **Code of Conduct**, it is important that schools:

- 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 pupil 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 appropriate measures of support that may be needed to ensure the needs of the pupil are met.
- 7 Follow school procedures for monitoring the well-being of pupil/s.
- 8 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 around them and to be invited into a rich understanding of the Church's teaching in these areas.

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 realised 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 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.

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.

Supporting Children and Young People at Risk

Are children aware of confidentiality procedures?

If we have any reason to believe a pupil is at risk, we are required to...

Our approach to confidentiality is...

Children 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 Primary Schools or the Schools Substance Use Policy, and notify parents/carers.

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 pupil'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.

- e.g.**
- 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...

The RSE Co-ordinator should 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 evaluated biannually by means of questionnaires / response sheets / needs assessment given to pupils, and / or by discussion with pupils, staff and parents. The results of the evaluation should be reported to these groups of interested parties and their suggestions sought for improvements. Governors will consider all such evaluations and suggestions before amending the policy. Governors remain ultimately responsible for the policy.

Staff Development and Training

Training should be organised by the RSE co-ordinator, in consultation with the Principal 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.

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. Therefore, whilst 'there is no legislative provision permitting parental withdrawal from sex education', schools can grant these requests on an individual basis.

Schools should consider how they can support parents or carers who choose to withdraw their child from all or part of the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme.

This may require the pupil going to another class for the duration of the lesson. The school should take account of parental/carers concerns and treat issues on an individual basis and support and allay concerns. Pupils should be provided with the teaching materials for home use on request and with the proper guidance.

Possible Appendices

Relevant documentation could be signposted, for example:

- Parent or carer-friendly summary of Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- Pupil-friendly summary of Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy
- Pupil-friendly list of contacts, websites and organisations related to Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Schemes of work/outline programme across the key stages
- Independent counselling service/support services
- Brief details of outside agencies/individuals the school uses to support the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education and an outline of the session(s)
- Relevant Legislation and DE Circulars

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 |



A biology teacher with curly hair and a beard, wearing a dark blazer, stands at the front of a classroom. He is holding a wooden stick and gesturing with his other hand. In the background, a whiteboard displays the title 'Biology Classwork' and the theme 'Human Skeleton'. Below the theme, it lists 'Adult human 207 bones:' followed by a list: 'Cranium 22 bones', 'Axial skeleton 80 bones', 'Lower extremities 19 bones', and 'Total 207 bones'. To the left of the teacher is a full human skeleton model. In the foreground, several students are seated at desks, with their hands raised in the air. A human skull is placed on a stand on the teacher's desk. The entire image has a warm, orange-toned overlay.

APPENDICES

Foundation Stage

Theme 1: Self Awareness

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: themselves and their personal attributes.

Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their own and others' feelings and emotions.

Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: The importance of keeping healthy.

Theme 4a: Safety

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: How to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments.

Theme 5: Relationships

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their relationships with family and friends.

Theme 8: Similarities and Differences

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: Similarities and differences.

Key Stage 1

Theme 1: Self Awareness

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their own and others' feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others.

Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: strategies and skills for keeping healthy.

Theme 4a: Safety

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: strategies and skills for keeping safe.

Theme 5: Relationships

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: and initiating mutually satisfying relationships.

Theme 8: Similarities and Differences

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: Similarities and differences between people.

Key Stage 2

Theme 1: Self Awareness

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals.

Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others.

Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change

Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: how to sustain their health, growth and well-being.

LIVING-LEARNING-TOGETHER

Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 (P1-P4)

Myself:

- How I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself, for example: hygiene, sleep, exercise.
- Their own and others' feelings/emotions and how their actions affect others.
- Naming parts of the body (basic) - developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- Being myself - I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself.
- Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example: uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth.
- An introduction to the stages of human development - changes as we grow, for example: baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents.
- Recognising moods, feelings and concerns and developing a language and an appropriate manner of expressing them, for example: what do I do if I feel sad or angry?
- Personal likes and dislikes.
- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- The importance of keeping healthy and strategies and skills for keeping healthy.

My Relationships:

- My family, special people in my life - what they do for me and what I do for them.
- Friendships, getting on with each other for example: communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing.
- Ageing - how do we know that things are alive, dead, young and old.
- Loss and mourning - death of a person or a pet (Note: situations of the pupils should be considered prior to introducing this topic).
- Respect and caring for family members and friends for example: caring for a new baby.
- Bullies and what to do about them.
- Personal safety - simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety.
- The difference between good and bad touches.
- Realise that adults and older children are not always friends; the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances.
- Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations.

My Community/Environment:

- Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families.
 - Keeping safe for example: dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help, how to get help from others.
 - Rules at home, at school and in the community.
- Respect and caring for people in the community, e.g. elderly people.

Key Stage 2 (P5-P7)

Myself:

- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy.
- The physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty (girls and boys).
- Myself and my peers - different rates of growth and physical development, maturity.
- Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Feelings for example: things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared; expressing our feelings, showing love and affection.
- Gender roles.
- Making choices - the influences on me and the consequences of actions for oneself and others.
- Distinguishing between right and wrong.
- Secrets - knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets.

My Relationships:

- Identifying the positive traits of friendship and their corresponding values.
- Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions and feelings.
- Families and how they behave - what family members expect of each other.
- The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships and social relationships for example: identifying and understanding pressures and influences, taking account of other people's point of view.
- Handling difficult situations for example: teasing, bullying, death of a family member.
- The meaning of relationships within families, between friends and in the community.
- Behaviour - what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact.
- Identifying dangers and risks within relationships.
- Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs.
- People who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions.

My Community/Environment:

- Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community.
- Cultural differences in families and family relationships.
- Helping agencies who can support families and individuals in different circumstances.

Messages and images about health, gender roles and sexuality from the media, family and peers.

Appendix 2 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 in advance 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 _____

Appendix 3 Sample Information Letter to Primary 7 Parents

Date _____

Dear Parent/Carer

Starting from _____(DATE)_____, Primary 7 pupils will be looking at the *Relationships and Sexuality Education RSE* curriculum. We will be exploring the following topics.

- The emotional and physical changes occurring in puberty
- Describing how to manage physical and emotional changes
- Explain how to stay clean during puberty
- Describe how emotions change during puberty
- Know how to get help and support during puberty

All these topics will be delivered in a sensitive and age appropriate way. This programme is delivered firmly within the context of the Church's teaching on sexuality.

Please come and talk to us if you have any concerns. We will be happy to discuss any part of the program. If you would like further information about the materials that we will be using, copies of the learning materials will be available on request from your class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

PRINCIPAL

I would / would not like to come in to discuss the RSE program with my child's class teacher.
I would / would not like a copy of the RSE resources.
I would / would not like to withdraw my child from RSE.

Name of Child: _____ Class: _____

Name of adult: _____ Date _____

References

- ACCORD Catholic Marriage Care Services (2002) *Love Rejoices in the Truth*, Belfast: ACCORD.
- Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994) Dublin: Veritas.
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (2017) *Learning to Love: An Introduction to Catholic Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) for Catholic Educators*.
- Catholic Education Service (2019) *A Model Policy for Relationships and Sex Education*, CES.
- Code of Canon Law (1983), Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Congregation for Catholic Education (1965) *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis*, London: CTS.
- Congregation for Catholic Education (1983) *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, London: CTS.
- Congregation for Catholic Education, (2019) *Male and Female He Created Them – Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, (1975) *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, Persona Humana*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools Circular 2013/19 *Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education*.
- Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) NI Curriculum (2001) *Guidance for Primary Schools: Relationships and Sexuality Education*.
- Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) NI Curriculum (2015) *Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary Schools*.
- Department of Education Circular 1986/45 *Sex Education*, Belfast
- Department of Education Circular 2001/15 *Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality*, Belfast
- Department of Education (2007) *NI Religious Education Core Syllabus*, Belfast.
- Department of Education (2009) *Every School A Good School*, Belfast
- Department of Education Circular 2010/01 *Guidance on Relationships and Sexuality Education*, Belfast
- Department of Education Circular 2010/18 *Every School a Good School: The Governors' Role*, Belfast
- Department of Education (2011) *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy*, Belfast
- Department of Education (2010) *Together Towards Improvement*, Belfast
- Department of Education Circular (2014) *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)*, Belfast
- Department of Education Circular 2015/22 *Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance: An Update for Primary*, Belfast.
- Department of Education Circular 2016/05 - *Children Who Display Harmful Sexualised Behaviour*, Belfast.
- Department of Education Circular 2017/04 - *Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools - A Guide for Schools*, Belfast.
- ETI (2016) *An Evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Primary and Special Schools*
- Education Authority, (2019) *Guidance for Schools, EOTAS Centres and Youth Service on Supporting Transgender Young People*.
- Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order* 1989, Belfast.
- Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) (2009) *Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination Law in Northern Ireland - A Short Guide – Education*, Belfast.
- European Court of Human Rights (2020) *Guide on Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights*, Council of Europe.

- Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (2008) Pastoral Letter: Vision 08: *A Vision for Catholic Schools*, Dublin: Veritas.
- Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (2010) *National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland: Share the Good News*, Dublin: Veritas.
- Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference (2014) *Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education NI*, Dublin: Veritas.
- Martin, E., (Arch) (2018) *Catholic Schools Supporting Families: Towards a Better Education of Children* Keynote Address to JMB/AMCSS 31st Annual Conference Galway.
- Pontifical Council for the Family (1995) *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Pope Francis (2016) Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia: The Joy of Love*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Pope Francis (2018) Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate: On the Call to Holiness in Today's World*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Pope John Paul II (1981) Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio: On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Pope Paul VI (1968) Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae: On the Regulation of Birth*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI), (2015) *Sexting and the Law: A Basic Guide to Help Professionals and the Public Deal with Incidents of 'Sexting'*.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2018) *International technical guidance on sexuality education, Appendix 1:25*, UNESCO.
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989)
- The Education Order (NI)* (2006)
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations* (2007).

Catholic Schools' Trustee Service
St Mary's University College
191 Falls Road
BELFAST
BT12 6FE