

RELATIONSHIP & SEXUALITY EDUCATION POLICY

2023-24

Reviewed September 2023

ST CIARAN'S COLLEGE

Including Everyone, Inspiring all to Succeed



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION & SCHOOL ETHOS

St Ciaran's College

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Policy Date: September 2023

RSE Co-ordinator: Mr B Rodgers

We St Ciaran's College view the development and implementation of a policy in Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) as an important step towards achieving our aim to develop all aspects of a young person's personality and growth. The morals and values of our Catholic ethos are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and develops throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

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, reasonable choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

POLICY FORMATION & CONSULATION PROCESS

Our school's RSE policy has been drafted using:

- CCEA 2023 RSE Whole-School Policy Framework
- 2021 RSE Guidance Document for Post Primary Schools NI – Catholic Schools' Trustee Service
- 2019 CCEA Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance – An Update for Post-Primary Schools. (www.ccea.org.uk) and guidance on the CCEA RSE Hub (Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE))
- 2018 CCEA guidance on Teaching Controversial Issues at Key Stages 3 and 4
- DE Circular 2013/16: Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy in schools
- DE circular 2015/22: Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance
- The Equality Act 2006/DE Circular 2010/01 – Equality Commission guidance March 2009: The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, available at www.legislation.gov.uk.
- UNCRC Articles 2, 13, 24, 28, 29, 34: of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, available at www.unicef.org.uk. Articles 28 and 29 state that 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.
- Every School a Good School, the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy and the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework, available at www.education-ni.gov.uk and www.etini.gov.uk.
- January 2011 ETI – Report of an Evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Post-Primary Schools.
- Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance (An update for Post Primary Schools CCEA). We also work with 'Love for Life' who support us with their school programmes and whose programmes are closely linked to the INSYNC Personal Development themes addressed in the ten themes.

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- Living Love Programme: The Virtues: Life Skills for a Loving Life.
 - Members of the RSE Team and all teachers were consulted and invited to respond to the draft policy. Amendments were made according to the recommendations coming from the consultation process.
 - The policy links to strategic objective 1 in the School Development Plan which focuses on enhancing our Christ-centred approach in St Ciaran's College. RSE is delivered through the PD programme and through various subjects. (RSE mapping document in Appendices).

A draft policy will be e-mailed to all teachers. They will be asked to review the policy and provide feedback or suggestions.

Parents will also be asked to provide feedback on the draft policy which will be made accessible on the school website. The contact person for comments or feedback is Mr B. Rodgers.

A focus group of pupils will be asked to provide feedback on RSE delivery and the policy.

The policy will be presented to the Board of Governors also to seek their views and approval.

The policy will be shared with all staff by e-mail. It will be available for parents on the school's website and in the school office.

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Governors in the autumn term 2023. The policy will be reviewed every two years by the RSE Co-ordinator, the Governing Body and the staff. The next review date is September 2025.

RSE seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and how to develop the skills and values they need to initiate and sustain healthy, mature, Christian relationships.

Relationships and intimacy is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about personal and social relationships and gender issues.

DEFINITION & RATIONALE FOR DELIVERY OF RSE

Definition

RSE is about the development of the pupil's knowledge and understanding of himself/herself as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience. RSE should give young people 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, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship.

Rationale

The school is involved in Relationships and Sexuality education precisely because of our Christian beliefs about God and the human person. The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins this approach to all education in a Catholic school. Our approach to RSE is therefore 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 PD 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 version 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.

Our programme enshrines Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage, and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential in responding to the God's call to love others with a proper respect for their dignity and the dignity of the human body. The following virtues will be explicitly explored and promoted: faithfulness, fruitfulness, chastity, integrity, prudence, mercy and compassion.

Aims

RSE is taught within the moral, social and spiritual framework that reflects the beliefs and ethos of a Catholic school. In line with our school ethos the following is a list of the aims in RSE which we wish to endorse through our programme:

- promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect, and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework
- help young people appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God
- enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God
- promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death
- value the gifts of marriage and the family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity, and patience
- understand marriage as the sacramental sign of God's love for his Church
- enable young people to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others.
- value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships and understand the law in relation to consent
- recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy, and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships
- understand that being single and chaste is a virtuous, positive, and fulfilling option
- promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender, or creed

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- encourage the young to always witness to human dignity online
 - encourage the young to see social media as another tool to reach people with the message that sexuality is a gift from God, not to be squandered and abused
 - recognise common mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm, and compulsive behaviours in themselves

Objectives of RSE

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

- realise that relationships can cause strong feelings and emotions including sexual attraction
- know the features of positive and stable relationships (including trust, mutual respect, honesty, equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (including imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, abuse of any kind)
- help pupils cope with the breakdown of a relationship and the effect of change, including loss, separation, divorce, and bereavement
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem
- acquire and develop an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, and development
- cope with the social, physical, and emotional challenges of growing up
- understand human physiology with reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases
- value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- understand different family structures, and the diversity of family life
- recognise the need for self-control and the importance of the virtue of chastity
- explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality
- recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it
- recognise the need for online safety
- recognise the impact of drugs and alcohol on choices and sexual behaviour
- be aware that the media portrayal of relationships may not reflect real life and understand the possible impact of this on people's expectations of relationships

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- help young people to become aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships and reduce people to objects for gratification

Skills Promoted (including personal & social)

Pupils will develop the ability to:

- form and maintain healthy, positive relationships which reflect the dignity of the human person
- make sound judgements and good choices
- manage emotions within relationships and the breakdown of relationships with sensitivity and dignity
- manage conflict positively and enable pupils to recognise the value of difference
- critically evaluate a wide range of information, opinions, attitudes, and values
- develop the communication skills of active listening, negotiation, offering and receiving constructive feedback and assertiveness
- cultivate mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven
- develop skills and strategies to respond appropriately to exploitation, bullying, harassment, and control in relationships (including the unique challenges posed by online abuse and the unacceptability of physical, emotional, sexual abuse)
- recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of both emotional and physical abuse or violence including 'honour' based violence, forced marriage and rape)
- be able to access support for self or others at risk
- develop the skills to challenge sexist, homophobic, racist, and disablist language, and behaviour
- evaluate the effect of alcohol and drug use on decision making and personal safety
- build resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so develop the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately
- develop coping strategies to overcome mental health issues and to recognise when they need to employ strategies to re-establish positive mental health including managing stress and anxiety

How Morals & Values are presenting within RSE Programme

RSE is not intended to be value free. It should be tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of pupils. The programme therefore aims 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 family, marriage and 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. They should be enabled to recognize the physical, emotional, and moral implications and risks of certain types of behaviour and to accept that both sexes must behave responsibly in sexual matters.

Teachers responsible for delivering the programme should however acknowledge that many children 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” (DfEE Circular No.5/1994 Education Act 1993: Sex Education in Schools/paragraph 8).

The following key messages will be promoted throughout the school:

- That information of a sexual nature is not permission to act on it.
- The deferment of sexual activity until marriage.
- An appreciation of the value of family life, marriage, permanent loving relationships, and the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Recognition of the positive benefits of seeking sexual fulfilment within a permanent committed relationship with one person.
- Recognition that sexual abstinence outside of marriage and fidelity within it is a positive and desirable option which is an achievable reality to which young people can aspire.
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care are important when people do not conform to their way of life.
- An appreciation that friendships and relationships should be based on self and mutual respect, non-exploitation, honesty, trust and commitment.
- Within relationships there should be recognition that rights, duties and responsibilities are involved.

Inclusion/SEN

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 prejudicial-based language and how to respond and ask for help.

RSE Curriculum

RSE is mainly delivered through the PD programme in each year group. This includes KS4 and Post-16. All pupils have a bespoke lesson of PD every week where they are taught in their form classes, in most cases by their form teacher.

RSE themes/topics in other subjects are mapped and teachers of these subjects are aware that these topics may be sensitive.

Special consideration will be given to pupils who may be pregnant or boys who may be fathers. 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.

Resources

The resources used will be quality-assured to ensure that they are inclusive and consistent with the school's moral and value framework.

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.

Teaching Strategies

RSE aims to develop personal and social skills and clarify attitudes and values within a moral framework. RSE seeks to promote behaviour which will allow pupils to take increasing responsibility for themselves as they grow and develop. Teaching methods which involve pupils actively in the process of their own learning 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 student and treats all pupils with due sensitivity and care.

Some important considerations might be:

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

Assessment of RSE

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

Use of Outside Agencies

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

All outside visitors/speakers will be approved by the Principal/RSE co-ordinator.

The RSE co-ordinator and teachers involved in the delivery of RSE will ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school.

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 will be made aware in advance of the use of outside agencies. Schools will explain the type of activities which will take place to ensure that parents and carers can 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 will be always present. Afterwards the teacher/s will provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss their experience/s and honestly evaluate the session/s

Parents & Carers

It is important that the school actively promotes the implementation of RSE and that parents/carers are fully informed of the content, timing, and the delivery of the programme 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.

School Website

The RSE policy will be published in its entirety on the school website and made available for parents/carers to download.

Ensuring the Curriculum is Balanced

While promoting Catholic values and virtues, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues. Pupils will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE relating to forced-marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality. Knowing about facts and enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints is not the same as promoting behaviour and is not incompatible with our school's promotion of Catholic teaching. We will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals and to relate to other individuals in a mature and respectful way.

Responsibility for Teaching the Programme

The programme will be led by RSE co-ordinator, Mr B. Rodgers, and Year Heads of each year group. It will be taught by Form Teachers, and specialist teachers in each of the relevant areas, e.g., RE, PE, science. It will be supported by relevant outside agencies and the Catholic School's Trustee Service.

Other Roles & Responsibilities

Trustees

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, organisational nature and ethos of their respective schools. The Bishop is responsible for all Catholic schools in his Diocese as evidenced by Canon Law 806§ which states that,
"The diocesan bishop has the right of supervision, visitation, and inspection of Catholic schools in his diocese, even those established or directed by members of religious orders. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools."

Board of Governors

Every School a Good School - The Governors' Role: A Guide for Governors outlines the role and responsibilities of Governors. Section 13.40 states,
"Boards of Governors should ensure that their schools have a Relationships and Sexuality Education policy and curriculum linked to their pastoral care/child protection policy."

This policy and the associated teaching should be the subject of consultation with staff and parents and endorsed by the Governors.”

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

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

Principal and Senior Management Team

As with all subject areas, it is the role of the Principal to make possible a coherent and coordinated 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.

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.

Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher/Special Needs Co-ordinator

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

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

Teaching Staff

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

Chaplain

The role of the chaplain is to:

- support the teaching of RSE where possible; meet with the co-ordinator to discuss the RSE programme and its delivery in school.
- witness to Gospel values.

Diocesan Advisor/Diocesan Advisor Support Service

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

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES & OTHER CURRICULUM SUBJECTS

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

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

Links to Other Subjects

Teachers of supporting subject areas should be informed of the content and timing of the delivery of RSE, and in so far as possible Relationships and Sexuality Education will be taught in a cross-curricular way. The following subject areas could contribute to a cross-curricular approach:

- Child Development
- Drama
- English
- Home Economics.
- Health and Social Care
- Learning for Life and Work
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Science & Technology

RESPONDING TO PUPILS' QUESTIONS & 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.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

Status of Families

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

The Virtue of Chastity

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

The Sanctity of Life

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

Sexual Orientation

In accordance with the Catholic ethos of our school, we uphold the Church's teaching that the meaning and purpose of sexual intimacy is fully realized in the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, faithful to one another for life and open to the possibility of transmission of new life, while recognizing and respecting the different views of others.

All pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably or isolated in any way on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Antagonism/bullying or other forms of abuse against pupils who reveal that they are homosexual will not be tolerated by the school. Respect for all people regardless of sexual orientation will be promoted in line with the school ethos – no pupils should be isolated on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Pupils have the right to hold different views/lifestyles in a peaceful manner.

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

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

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

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

Family Planning

In Familiaris Consortio (1981:14) Pope John Paul II spoke of God’s plan when he said that marriage is ‘the foundation of the wider community of the family,’ and that the ‘institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children.’

In accordance with this, Catholic teaching places sexual intercourse within the Sacrament of Marriage and the use of any artificial means of preventing procreation is not acceptable. Catholic teaching on family planning will be presented and pupils will also be provided with accurate information about methods of artificial contraception in an age appropriate and sensitive manner.

Sexually Transmitted Infections

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

Digital Safety

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

SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK

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

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 & TRAINING

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

The school will consider on an individual basis how they can support parents or carers who request to withdraw their child from all or part of the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme.

This may require the student going to another class for the duration of the lesson. The school will take account of parental/carer 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.

APPENDIX I

STATUTORY CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS FOR RSE

Key Stage 3 & 4: Learning for Life and Work - Personal Development Strand

Key Concept - Self Awareness

Exploring Self Awareness provides opportunities to consider the importance of self-confidence and self-esteem to physical and emotional/mental health throughout life.

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- Explore and express a sense of self
- Explore personal morals, values and beliefs
- Investigate the influences on a young person
- Explore the different ways to develop self-esteem
- Develop skills and strategies to improve own learning

Key Concept - Personal Health

Exploring Personal Health provides opportunities to understand the importance of recognising and managing factors that may influence physical and emotional/mental health throughout life.

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- Explore the concept of Health as the development of a whole person
- Investigate the influences on physical and emotional/mental personal health
- Develop understanding about, and strategies to manage, the effects of change on body, mind and behaviour
- Investigate the effects on the body of legal and illegal substances and the risks and consequences of their misuse
- Develop strategies to promote personal safety

Key Concept - Relationships

Exploring Relationships provides opportunities to understand the importance of forming and maintaining relationships to physical and emotional/mental health throughout life.

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- Explore the qualities of relationships, including friendships
- Explore the qualities of a loving, respectful relationship
- Develop coping strategies to deal with challenging relationship scenarios
- Develop strategies to avoid and resolve conflict
- Explore the implications of sexual maturation
- Explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes require the demonstration of skills and application of knowledge and understanding of Personal Development.

Pupils should be able to:

- research and manage information effectively to investigate Personal Development issues, including Using Mathematics and Using ICT where appropriate;
- show deeper understanding by thinking critically and flexibly, solving problems and making informed decisions, demonstrating Using Mathematics and Using ICT where appropriate;
- demonstrate creativity and initiative when developing ideas and following them through;
- work effectively with others;
- demonstrate self-management by working systemically, persisting with tasks, evaluating and improving own performance;
- communicate effectively in oral, visual, written and ICT formats, showing clear awareness of audience and purpose.

Key Concept - Home and Family Life

Exploring Home and Family Life provides opportunities to understand the importance of the family as a caring unit.

Pupils should have opportunities to:

- Explore the roles and responsibilities of individuals within a variety of home and family structures
- Develop awareness of parenting skills
- Investigate some of the changing needs of family members at different stages of the life cycle
- Explore strategies to manage family scenarios

Key Stage 4 Statutory Statements of Requirement for LLW - Personal Development Strand

Pupils should be enabled to:

- Develop an understanding of how to maximise and sustain their own health and well-being;
- Reflect on, and respond to, their developing concept of self, including managing emotions and reactions to on-going life experiences;
- Recognise, assess and manage risk in a range of real-life contexts;
- Develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships;
- Develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parenting

APPENDIX II

SAMPLE SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT FOR EXTERNAL AGENCIES

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

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

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

APPENDIX III

SAMPLE INFORMATION LETTER TO PARENTS

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

In Year your daughter/son/child's Relationships and Sexuality programme will be concerned with the following topics.

- (a) Responsible Relationships
- (b)
- (c)
- (d)

The units form part of her/his Science, Religious Education and Learning for Life and Work (LLW) Programmes of Study. This programme is placed firmly within the context of the Church's teaching on sexuality.

If you have any concerns or wish further information on the teaching of this unit, please contact one of the following teachers: (Head of RE), (Head of Science),..... (Co-ordinator of Health Education,..... (LLW)

We look forward to your continuing support in the future.

Yours sincerely
Principal

APPENDIX IV

RESOURCES

CCEA

- <http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/key> stage 4/areas/learning/learning life and work
- <http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/rse>
- <http://ccea.org.uk/growing/about.php>
- <http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/sen> inclusion
- <https://ccea.org.uk/learning-resources/relationships-and-sexuality-education-rse> - CCEA RSE Hub

All documents are available at www.ccea.org.uk

iMatter programme:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/imatter-programme>

Living Love Programme – Catholic Schools Trustee Service

Catholiceducation-ni.org

Insync – Key Stage 3 Personal Development

- Learning for Life and Work at Key Stage 4
- Active Learning and Teaching Methods for Key Stage 3
- Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities at Key Stage 3
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment at Key Stage 4
- Guidance on Teaching Controversial Issues at Key Stage 3

Outside Agencies:

- Love for Life
- Catholic Schools Trustee Service
- Familyworks counselling service