



RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

Mount St Mary's Catholic High School Relationships & Sex Education Policy

Adopted by Mount St Marys' Governing Body on 1 September 2022

Signed

Chair of Governors

Review date: 1 September 2025

Our Mission: The community of Mount St Mary's is called to develop the full potential of each person – spiritually, academically, socially and physically and to create a safe, happy and caring school.

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child and we believe that Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is an integral part of this education. It is in this context that we commit ourselves, in partnership with parents¹, to provide children and young people with a “positive and prudent [relationships and] sexual education”² which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in the Catholic vision of education and the human person.

This policy has been adopted in consultation with the Governors and teachers, and in partnership with students and their parents through Progress Review Day.

Implementation and Review of Policy

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the Governors in September 2021. This policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Headteacher, RSE Co-ordinator, the Governing Body and Staff. The next review date is September 2023.

Dissemination

The policy will be given to all members of the Governing Body and all teaching and non-teaching members of staff. Details of the policy and content of the RSE curriculum will be published on the school's web site. Copies of the policy will be available to all registered parents on request and a copy is available in the school office.

Statutory Curriculum Requirements

The statutory framework that surrounds education about human relationships largely falls within three key areas.

- The National Curriculum (2014)
- Statutory Guidance: 'Sex and Relationships Education Guidance' (2020)
- The Children's Act (2004)

¹ Parents is used to refer to carers, guardians and parents.

² *Gravissimum Educationis* 1

State Funded Maintained Schools		
Whole Curriculum	Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students at the school and of society; -prepares students at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.	
Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education	Department for Education: all schools should make provision for PSHE, drawing on best practice. Schools are free to develop their own PSHE programme to reflect the needs of their students.	
Sex and Relationships Education	Statutory for secondary aged children to have sex education that includes HIV, Aids and other sexually transmitted infections	At MSM GCSE RE covers religious teachings on relationships and families. The Sacrament of Marriage, sexual relationships premarital, cohabitation, homosexuality, extra marital sex are all covered with the changes in society but within the context of Catholic teachings. Catholic responses to different types of family within the 21 st century including nuclear, single parents, same sex parents, extended parent. It covers the Catholic teaching about artificial contraception and natural family planning with reference to Humanae Vitae, non religious views and divergent Christian opinions. Lessons also include divorce, annulment and remarriage and equality of men and women in the family.
Sex and Relationships Education Guidance	Any school that provides SRE has a statutory duty to have due regard to Sex and Relationships Education Guidance DfE 2020	
National Curriculum	Statutory sex education forms part of the science programmes of study across Key Stages 1-3.	Year 7 Science lessons at MSM cover puberty and the human reproductive system and year 9 analyse STDs
Sex and Relationships Education Policy	DfE Guidance (2020) states that all schools should have an up to date SRE policy available for inspection and on request for parents or carers.	

In Catholic education, the reasons for our teaching of RSE go further.

Aim of Catholic Relationships and Sex Education

The aim of Catholic RSE is rooted in a particular context, that Catholic Christianity is a living tradition of lifelong learning in the knowledge and love of God. This learning is not additional to learning about ourselves and our relationships with others and the world, but constitutive of such learning because it treats of God and of all things, in their relationship to God as their beginning and their end, their origin and destiny.³

'God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God and God lives in him.' (1 Jn. 4:16)

'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (Jn.10:10)

'God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.' (Gen. 1:27)

We teach RSE precisely because of our Christian beliefs about God and about the human person. At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This communion of love at the heart of God reveals that the desire for fulfilling and flourishing human relationships, is God-given. 'Communities are brought into being by the participation of men and women, responding to the divine impulse to love and to be loved – which was implanted by the God who created them.'⁴ In short, human beings are not simply created to be relational, but created to love and to be loved just as God is love.

The belief that God became man in Christ animates our approach to RSE. The Incarnation endows the human form with an extraordinary dignity and shows that our relationship with our own bodies is not casual but infused with the Holy Spirit⁵. Humanity is called to embrace Christ's invitation to follow him, because the encounter with Christ gives life a decisive direction – gives life to the full.

The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins our approach to RSE. We believe that everyone possesses a 'basic dignity that comes from God, not from any human quality or accomplishment, not from race, or gender, age or economic status'.⁶ As a consequence, not only is every member of the school community worthy of great respect but gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, reflect God's beauty, and share in the divine creativity.

Following the guidance of the Bishops of England and Wales and as advocated by the DFE RSE will be firmly embedded in the PSHE framework. The school will aim to ensure, through a faith motivated person centred approach that all students, appropriate to their age, level of maturity and developmental needs, develop the necessary attitudes and values, the personal and social skills, and knowledge and understanding to ensure that they have the capacity to make sound judgements, good choices and enjoy relationships based on love, mutual respect, dignity and responsibility free from any abuse or exploitation and to accept their own and others' sexuality in positive ways and as a gift essential to their personal identity.

³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q.1, ad2; q.1, a. 7. C.

⁴ The Common Good in Education, p. 6, Catholic Education Service 1997.

⁵ 'Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God. You are not your own property ... That is why you should use your body for the glory of God' 1 Cor. 6:19-20

⁶ The Common Good in Education, p. 6.

Values and Virtues

Our programme enshrines Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential to 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: love, mercy, compassion, faithfulness, temperance (chastity), fortitude and prudence.

Our approach acknowledges that all students have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from and support will be provided to help students deal with different sets of values.

Defining Relationships and Sex Education

In RSE children will learn about their spiritual, social, moral, emotional and physical development in ways appropriate to their age, level of maturity and developmental needs. We promote and teach the importance of love for relationships, including love's sexual expression in marriage. The teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health will be placed in the context of Catholic Church teaching.

The DFE guidance defines RSE as "lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage and family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health"⁷. The DFE identifies three main elements: "attitudes and values, personal and social skills, and knowledge and understanding"⁸.

Objectives

To develop the following **attitudes and virtues**:

- reverence for the gift of human sexuality and fertility;
- respect for the dignity of every human being – in their own person and in the person of others;
- joy in the goodness of the created world and their own bodily natures;
- responsibility for their own actions and a recognition of the impact of these on others;
- recognising and valuing their own sexual identity and that of others;
- celebrating the gift of life-long, self-giving love;
- recognising the importance of marriage and family life;
- fidelity in relationships.

To develop the following **personal and social skills**:

- making sound judgements and good choices which have integrity and which are respectful of the individual's commitments;
- loving and being loved, and the ability to form friendships and loving, stable relationships free from exploitation, abuse and bullying;
- managing emotions within relationships, and when relationships break down, with confidence, sensitivity and dignity;
- managing conflict positively, recognising the value of difference;
- cultivating humility, mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven;
- developing self-esteem and confidence, demonstrating self-respect and empathy for others;
- building resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so developing the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately;
- being patient, delaying gratification and learning to recognise the appropriate stages in the development of relationships, and how to love chastely;
- assessing risks and managing behaviours in order to minimise the risk to health and personal integrity.

⁷ Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, DfE, 2020

⁸ *ibid*

To know and understand:

- the Church's teaching on relationships and the nature and meaning of sexual love;
- the Church's teaching on marriage and the importance of marriage and family life;
- the centrality and importance of virtue in guiding human living and loving;
- the physical and psychological changes that accompany puberty;
- the facts about human reproduction, how love is expressed sexually and how sexual love plays an essential and sacred role in procreation;
- fertility in a way which is compatible with their stage of life, their own values and commitments, including an understanding of the difference between natural family planning and artificial contraception;
- the reasons for delaying sexual activity and the benefits to be gained from such delay
- how to keep themselves safe from sexually transmitted infections and avoid unintended pregnancy.

Entitlement and Delivery

Inclusion and differentiated learning

We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual students in respect to students' 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 students 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. (In looking at these questions, it is important to draw links to the school's inclusion policy). Students with particular difficulties whether of a physical or intellectual nature will receive appropriately differentiated support in order to enable them to achieve mature knowledge, understanding and skills. Teaching methods will be adapted to meet the varying needs of this group of students.

Learning about RSE in PSHCE classes will link to/complement learning in those areas identified in the RSE audit.

Equalities obligations

The Governing Body have wider responsibilities under the Equalities Act 2010 and will ensure that our school strives to do the best for all of the students, irrespective of disability, educational needs, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, pregnancy, maternity, sex, gender identity, religion or sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children.

Broad content of RSE

Three aspects of RSE - attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding, and personal and social skills will be provided in three inter-related ways: the whole school / ethos dimension; a cross-curricular dimension and a specific relationships and sex curriculum.

Integrated curriculum

The RSE programme will promote Catholic values and virtues in accordance with Church teaching and ensure that students are offered a range of viewpoints on issues. Students will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE (in secondary schools⁹ relating to forced-marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality). We will ensure that students have access to the learning they need to stay safe,

⁹ Secondary refers to High Schools, Colleges and Academies with either 11-16, 11-18 or 16-18 age groups.

healthy and understand their rights as individuals. ***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.***

The Governors believe that children are best educated, protected from harm and exploitation by discussing such issues openly within the context of the RSE programme. The use of ground rules, negotiated between teachers and students, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion. Governors want to ensure that students can ask questions freely, be confident that their questions will be answered, and be sure that they will be free from bullying or harassment from other children and young people.

PROGRAMME/RESOURCES

<p>SCIENCE KS3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the functions of the human reproductive systems • Explain how sperm and egg cells are specialised for their function. • Describe how the fusing of gametes and their nuclei during fertilisation forms a fertilised egg cell. • Describe what happens following the fertilisation of an egg cell including cell division • Describe the supply and removal of materials from and to the foetus • Describe the effects of some substances that may harm a developing foetus. • Identify stages of growth from embryo to new-born baby and recall how these stages can be checked. • Describe what happens during labour and birth in humans. • Describe the causes of infertility. • Identify the role of sex hormones in puberty. • Describe what happens to parts of the body during puberty and adolescence. • Explain the purpose of the menstrual cycle. • Use knowledge of the menstrual cycle to predict timings (e.g. of menstruation, ovulation, fertile period).
<p>KS4 Topic 5 -7 – Health and diseases (extract) HIV/ AIDS and other viruses Vaccinations STD's herd immunity and vaccinations Topic 7 Smoking during pregnancy Alcohol and pregnancy Topic 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the difference between communicable and non-communicable diseases. • Explain why the presence of one disease can lead to a higher susceptibility to other diseases. • Describe some common infections including e) HIV *virus) destroys white blood cells leading to the onset of AIDS. • Explain how sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are spread and how this spread can be reduced or prevent, including: a) chlamydia (bacteria), b) HIV (virus). • Types of reproduction • Cell division in sexual reproduction • Topic 11 • Human reproduction • Hormone and menstrual cycle • Artificial control and fertility • Infertility treatments

PSHCE

<p>Year 7 Group discussion, Range of resources. Signposting to other staff. Anon questions. Feedback. Confidentiality. Introduction to Protective Characteristics</p>	<p>Puberty, relationships What are the qualities of a positive friendship / relationship The difference between a positive and negative relationship and how to spot the signs of coercion What is a safe relationship What to expect from puberty. Understanding diversity Introduction to intimate relationships</p>
<p>Year 8 Group discussion, Range of resources. Signposting to other staff. Anon questions. Feedback. Confidentiality. Protective Characteristics The Law</p>	<p>Relationships. Taught what to expect from a relationship, explain who they can have a relationship with and what is safe and unsafe. Scenarios to include DV. Loving relationships and abstinence Online relationships the risks and the law regarding sending and receiving sexual images. Honour based violence and forced marriages FGM</p>
<p>Year 9 Group discussion, Range of resources. Signposting to other staff. Anon questions. Feedback. Confidentiality. Protective Characteristics The Law</p>	<p>Contraception choices/relationships Taught about different choices including Catholic choices always reinforcing that we are a Catholic school and relevant teachings. Managing sexual attraction Risk taking behaviour Peer pressure and consent. Marriage and civil partnerships Forced marriage and FGM Introduction to STI's</p>
<p>Year 10 Carousel workshops Group discussion, Range of resources. Signposting to other staff and agencies. Anon questions. Feedback. Confidentiality. Protective Characteristics The Law</p>	<p>Positive relationships Pregnancy choices, contraception, abstinence and responsibility Sexual harassment and the law Peer pressure and risk taking behaviour. Making positive choices Pornography myths and the law</p>
<p>Year 11 Carousel workshops Group discussion, Range of resources. Signposting to other staff and agencies. Anon questions. Feedback. Confidentiality. Protective Characteristics The Law</p>	<p>How to maintain positive relationships Recap pregnancy choices, contraception and STI's. Health and fertility Sexual harassment and coercion. FGM</p>

Resources:

All that I Am: a handbook for staff in secondary school, p.7.

John Paul II's 'Theology of the Body'.

Life organisation – information leaflets on sexual transmitted diseases.

Familiaris Consortio document about family life.

Sanctity of life – Catholic teachings on abortion and contraception. Humanae Vitae on human life.

Church teachings relating to Sacrament of Marriage, divorce and homosexual relationships.

Other Christian views relating to these topics.

BBC website outlining ethical issues

Matthew 19.8, Matthew 5 v32 – teachings on divorce.

Mindmate

Healthy Schools resources

Leeds.Gov website

Barnardos

Teaching strategies

It is essential that we help children and young people develop confidence in talking, listening and thinking about sex and relationships. Teachers and other staff have ongoing training and appropriate resources to ensure this subject is taught sensitively with accurate information within a nurturing and safe environment. A partnership between Holy Family and our parents is key to success.

There are a number of teaching strategies that can help this, including:

- establishing ground rules with their students;
- using 'distancing' techniques;
- knowing how to deal with unexpected questions or comments from students;
- using discussion and project learning methods and appropriate materials;
- encouraging reflection.
 - SEND students will have extra support to ensure the information is differentiated and taught specific to their need.

Ground Rules

A set of ground rules will help teachers create a safe environment in which they do not feel embarrassed or anxious about unintended or unexpected questions or comments from students. Ground rules might be developed as part of the school's sex and relationship education policy or individually with each class or year group.

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

For example:

- If a question is too personal, the teacher should remind the student of the ground rules. If the student needs further support, the teacher can refer her or him to the appropriate person, such as the Student Advocate, Catholic Care, helpline, or an outside agency or service;
- If a teacher doesn't know the answer to a question, it is important to acknowledge this, and to suggest that the student or teacher or both together research the question later;
- If a question is too explicit, feels too old for a student, is inappropriate for the whole class, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should acknowledge it and promise to attend to it later on

an individual basis. In this way, the student will feel they have been treated with respect, but the rest of the class will not have to listen to personal experience or inappropriate information. To maintain trust and respect the teacher must remember to talk with the student later;

- If a teacher is concerned that a student is at risk of sexual abuse, they should follow the school's child protection procedures.

Discussion and project learning

Research into what makes sex and relationship education effective shows that discussion and project learning encourages learning and is enjoyed by students.

Students take part in a structured activity in which they can:

- draw on previous knowledge to develop more understanding;
- practise their social and personal skills;
- consider their beliefs and attitudes about different topics;
- reflect on their new learning;
- plan and shape future action.

Active learning is most effective when students are working in groups. Teachers should also assess the usefulness of providing factual information in written form for young people to keep for future reference.

Reflection

Reflecting is crucial for learning as it encourages students to consolidate what they have learned and to form new understanding, skills and attitudes.

Teachers can help students reflect on their learning by asking questions like these:

- What was it like doing this discussion today?
- What did you learn from the others, especially those who had a different experience or belief from your own?
- What do you think you will be able to do as a result of this discussion?
- What else do you think you need to think or learn about?

Key points

MSM needs to help young people develop confidence in talking, listening and thinking about sex and relationships.

Our teachers and other staff can use a range of strategies to help them do this, including establishing ground rules, introducing 'distancing' techniques, making use of discussion and project learning, and encouraging reflection.

Assessment

In Science students' work will be assessed through evidence found in book work and through questioning. Students will take part in self-assessment activities. Students will be assessed at the end of each unit using a formal assessment.

For GCSE RS they will have an assessment on this part of the course and will also be part of their final exam.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents

Parents are the primary educators of their children. The school seeks to support and not replace them in this task. We recognise that parents sometimes experience and express difficulty in discussing RSE with their children. Support, understanding and advice will be offered to parents to deal with sensitive issues they may need to address. Parents will be informed by letter when the more sensitive aspects of RSE will be covered in order that they can be prepared to talk and answer questions about their children's learning.

Parents have been consulted about this policy before it was ratified by the Governing Body. The school will also provide parents with opportunities for consultation on the RSE programme including during the process of its review and evaluation. They will be able to view the resources used by the school in the RSE programme. Our aim is that every parent will have full confidence in the school's RSE policy and programme.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RSE except in those elements which are required by the National Curriculum science orders. Should parents wish to withdraw their children they are asked to notify the school by contacting the Headteacher. The school will support parents by providing material to help the children with their learning.

Governors

The Foundation Governors of Catholic schools are appointed by the Bishop in order to promote and safeguard the Catholic character of the school. Governors will consult on the policy and approve the RSE policy in accordance with the Catholic character of the school and in line with other policies. Governors will ensure that the policy is made available to parents and ensure that parents know of their right to withdraw their children. Governors will provide an effective system for the monitoring and evaluation of the RSE policy, programme and resources used. Finally, governors will ensure that the RSE policy places RSE within PHSE and provides effective coverage of the relevant National Curriculum science orders.

Headteacher

The Headteacher takes overall delegated responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for liaison with the Governing Body, parents, the Vicariate for Education and appropriate agencies.

PHSE / RSE Co-ordinator

The co-ordinator, along with the Headteacher, has a general responsibility for supporting other members of staff in the implementation of this policy and will provide a lead in the dissemination of the information relating to RSE and the provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). *(They may be supported by the curriculum deputy and the member of staff with responsibility for child protection).*

Responsibility for teaching the specific RSE programme lays with specialist staff within the Safeguarding and Student Advocate Team, alongside Form Tutors and the Science and Religious Education departments.

The co-ordinators (Safeguarding team and Mark Wylam) will monitor the provision of the various dimensions of the programme by examining plans, schemes of work and samples of students work at regular intervals.

The results of any 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.

Teachers of RSE

All teachers should actively contribute to the guardianship of the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of their students as well as fostering academic progress. Teachers will be expected to teach RSE in accordance with the Catholic character of the school. Appropriate training will be made available for all staff teaching RSE.

All Staff

RSE is a whole school issue. Every member of staff has a duty of care to uphold the dignity of all. All staff will be involved in developing the attitudes and values aspect of the RSE programme. They will be role models for students of good relationships between staff, other adults and students. They will also be contributing to the development of students' personal and social skills.

All staff have been included in the development of this policy and all staff should be aware of the policy and how it relates to them.

Outside Agencies and External Staff

Support and guidance from outside agencies and health professionals will always complement the current RSE programme and never substitute or replace teacher led sessions. The school's leadership will inform any external visitor of the school's policy and Catholic character so they are clear about their role and responsibility when delivering a session in a Catholic context. Any visitor must adhere to our code of practice, developed in line with CES guidance 'Protocol for Visitors to Catholic Schools' and the Diocesan protocol for visitors to Catholic schools.¹⁰

Safeguarding

There will always be sensitive or controversial issues discussed in RSE. 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 well lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. Where a teacher has any concerns they are required to follow the school's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the designated senior member of staff responsible.

¹⁰ Protocol for Visitors to Catholic Schools, CES, Feb. 2011