

Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) Policy



St John's College, Cardiff

RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

This policy applies to all sections of the School:

Sixth Form, Senior School, Junior School,
Infant School & Nursery.

Version: September 2024

Mission Statement

At St John's College, we encourage the entire school community, as children of God, to realise their potential and be the best they can be. We aim to inspire and advance independent, critical thinking; creating a curiosity and wonder for learning in its broadest sense.

Using our Christian values that draw upon the teachings of the Catholic Church, we love and cherish each other, celebrating our similarities and respecting our differences. We enrich pupils' experiences by providing equal opportunities that promote a deep respect for everyone, regardless of gender, race, creed or ability.

We strive for happiness in all that we do; the family values of respect, compassion and security are at the heart of who we are. We rejoice in preparing our children for life beyond St John's, nurturing the desire and ability to have a positive impact as global citizens.



1. Introduction

This policy has been adopted by the Trustees (and governing body) of St John's College.

This policy is to be read alongside other RSE guidelines.

2. Vision and Mission

Each person in our school is unique and our principal educational aim is that they will all develop spiritually, morally, socially and academically to their full potential in a community of love - with Jesus as their guide, the Holy Spirit as their inspiration and God as their loving Father.

Vision for Relationship and Sex Education.

At St John's College, we are inspired by Jesus - the perfect example of humanity - to be the very best we can be. We look after one another and show respect and love through our relationships with one another. Jesus is invited into our lives in moments of silent reflection in the confident faith that, in the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to lead a full life in relationship with him and by so doing become truly blessed and happy. This is about understanding how loving our neighbour fulfils the Great Commandment and contributes to the building of God's Kingdom while also enabling us to find our true fulfilment. Therefore, having a good relationship with God, ourselves and the other people in our lives makes us flourish into the people God has destined us to be. We respect that everyone is a unique and beautiful part of God's creation, and enjoys a unique and inalienable dignity as a member of the Body of Christ. Acknowledging our common ancestry as adopted sons and daughters of God we recognise our vocation as having been called to grow in love for him through the person of Jesus Christ and to spread the Good News through the action of the Holy Spirit.

3. Procedures

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

- Staff;
- Governing body;
- Parents;
- Diocesan Education Service.

When approved this policy will also be shared with our parish community and wider community via the school website.

In consultation with the Trustees and Governing Body, the policy will be implemented in 2019, reviewed every two years by the Headteacher, RSE Co-ordinator, the Governing Body, Staff and pupils. The next review date is August 2020.

The policy will be circulated to all the Trustees and all members of staff. See also the school prospectus and the school website where a full copy of the policy is available for parents. The Diocesan Director of Education/Director of RE will be sent a copy of the school's RSE policy and it is the duty of the Governing Body to ensure that this is up to date.

4. Rationale

We use the term Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) as we believe that 'sex education' must be set in the wider context of a more holistic relationship education. In line with Catholic anthropology we believe our children need to be introduced to the four relational dimensions of human life and learn to situate sex and relationship education in its proper context as one dimension of this greater whole.

The defining belief of Christianity is the Incarnation - that God "emptied Himself of glory" to take on human form. This endows the human person with an extraordinary dignity that goes beyond that of all other forms of life and shows that humanity alone can embrace this relationship with God. Therefore, our relationship with our own bodies is not casual - our bodies are the dwelling place, the 'temple' of the Holy Spirit. Any teaching about love and sexual relationships in school must be rooted in this belief which is expressed in the Church's teaching about relationships, marriage, sex and family life.

The Church's view of education has to be understood and take place within the context of a larger and more complete human formation. As the CES states, "It should be carried out as part of the holistic education which seeks to form as well as inform young people in preparation for adult life." Accordingly, education about human love is no less a part of a Catholic school's responsibility than teaching about Mathematics or English. At St John's College we teach young people about how to grow in relationships, including understanding loving relationships and acknowledging that a child's first experience of love is in the home. We encourage children from the earliest age to recognise that they are all children of God and that each person shares a God-given dignity.

As children mature, we encourage them to follow the example of Jesus and live lives inspired by the Gospel virtues, enabling them to follow His commandment to

"Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

This is the basis for all relationships in our school. Teaching about relationships in our schools is supported by Christian virtue teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Pupil Profile.

Legal guidelines suggest that relationship and sex education should build on the children's own experiences, be sensitive to the specific domestic contexts the children come from, form attitudes and values towards relationships, develop personal and social skills and increase the knowledge and understanding of each young person about their relationships and well-being, including sexual health. We support all these aims in educating about relationships and sex education by incorporating them into the wider understanding of human relationships and human formation as reflected in the relevant CBCEW (Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales) and CES (Catholic Education Service) RSE Guidance.

5. Statutory Framework

The statutory framework that surrounds education about human relationships can be found on the CES website.

The Trustees of St John's have adopted the RSE Archdiocese of Cardiff Scheme which is in line with Catholic teaching and guidance from Welsh Government documentation. As a school we respect the statutory rights of parents to withdraw their children from any or all parts of sex education and make every effort to inform parents of what and how this is to be taught. We also provide opportunities for parents to discuss concerns before making their decision. As a Catholic school committed to the education of the whole person, teaching on relationships and sexuality will be reflected in each relevant part of the curriculum. Whilst some aspects of RSE will be more appropriately explored in PSE and Science lessons, others will be more appropriately explored in RE lessons. **Each curriculum area should speak with consistency** about the human person and how we think and act lovingly.

6. Virtues and Values

Gospel virtues and values underpin the RSE curriculum. The Christian tradition describes any behaviour or habits that lead to happiness, human flourishing and a closer relationship with God as virtues. These virtues are described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and fall into two groups. The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are about developing the habits of being open to the work of the Holy Spirit and developing a deeper relationship with God through living a balanced and good life. The cardinal virtues of practical wisdom (prudence), justice, fortitude and temperance help people develop habits of reason, fairness, emotional resilience and self-mastery. They are human virtues and, as such, are part of the development of people of all faiths or none as they learn how to flourish, thrive and to have a life supported by strong and caring relationships. The cardinal virtues are drawn from the teachings of Plato and Aristotle and are held in common with people of many faiths and secular beliefs. St. Thomas Aquinas attributes the theological virtues as having their foundation in God, they complete the cardinal virtues and are the way people can reach "the abundant life" (John 10:10).

At St John's we strive to live out the Gospel values shared in the Beatitudes, throughout the life of the school by identifying 16 Virtues which we call the Pupil Profile and all stakeholders understand that these virtues will be explored and lived out by our children throughout their time in our schools.

Staff have the responsibility to model Gospel values and virtues, while children are encouraged to do the same, thereby enabling them to progress in knowledge about moral behaviour throughout their time at school. Our children are encouraged to build compassionate, positive relationships with everyone in the school community and they are given opportunities to regularly reflect on their behaviour in the light of the example of Jesus' care for others.

As pupils progress through the various Key Stages they will develop an ever deeper understanding of the nature of moral behaviour and be able to see and express why this is important for personal happiness and for a closer relationship with God. In addition to the points made above, pupils are given opportunities to learn how prayer enables them to make space for God in their lives and opportunities to learn techniques and disciplines for reflection and growth.

By the end of Key Stage 2, children should be able to explain some behaviour choices by reference to their beliefs and values, for example, by referring to Jesus' teaching about forgiveness.

By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils should be able to discern the relevant factors of more complex moral situations and make decisions that are informed by Christian love and respect for the dignity of all God's people.

By the end of Key Stage 4 students should be developing a balanced and healthy self-understanding of themselves and the wider communities in which they live. They should be able to criticise elements of our culture that are nihilistic and contrary to the destiny to which all human beings are called by God. They should also have begun to discern what God may be calling them to do, viz. their vocation, not just their career.

7. The Aim and Objectives of RSE

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

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

This is why Christ and His Gospel must be the foundation of the educational project of each school and college, because He is 'the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection' (Congregation for Catholic Education, The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School).

Therefore, the Catholic school or college is called to keep the Gospel whole and alive amongst pupils, families, and staff. RSE should therefore deepen the following areas of understanding:

- To develop self-knowledge, self-respect and an ordinate love of self;
- To invite young people to develop and deepen a loving and living relationship with God;
- To invite young people to understand that their life (and everyone else's) has a purpose in God's providential plan, and that because of this is of infinite value and meaning;
- To invite young people to develop and deepen relationships with each other based on mutual respect and care and to understand this is an expression of God's love;
- To foster an understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church about how to live a full life, a life of virtue, and the place of human sexuality in living a full life, marriage and parenthood that is appropriate to the stage of maturity of the young people;
- A strong awareness of their own safety and the nature of appropriate consent;
- To have an understanding of the law in England and Wales about Equality and Marriage, appropriate to age and maturity.

RSE will develop attitudes, personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding.

We will seek to:

- develop attitudes of awe and wonder for the gift and beauty of self, respect for each other as children of God and rejoice in the goodness of God's creation.
- develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity in all.
- enable children to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.
- encourage children to learn about expressing their own emotions and being respectful of the emotions and behaviours of others.
- encourage the whole school to be like a loving family recognising God as a merciful and generous father as Jesus taught in the Lord's prayer.
- encourage everyone in the school to recognise their part in the school family and work together for reconciliation when relationships in the school falter.
- encourage everyone in the school to value humility, mercy and compassion and to respond with empathy to the problems of others.
- develop children's knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for their own safety.
- develop children's experience of what it is to be truly happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and mere gratification and so come to value patience.
- teach children about the media and their choices, about what they should watch and why, what games to play, what rules apply and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.
- support children when relationships in their lives are challenging and teach them that there are people in school who will listen if they are experiencing changes that make them frightened or uncomfortable.
- foster an atmosphere in school which celebrates the work of the Trinity through the life of the school and its relationship with the Church.
- teach children about the beauty of the Church's teaching about love and God's love for them which is shared in the Sacraments.
- sensitively share the Church's teaching about marriage and family life as a way to live in loving relationships with others and with God.

8. Inclusion

At St John's College we value the uniqueness of every person, and we identify that young people mature in different ways and at different speeds. Our teaching about relationships and sexuality is respectful of each child's starting point, their faith, culture and background. Lessons are framed by this understanding and young people are encouraged to respect each other in their differences, and develop an approach of dialogue that seeks those beliefs and values that we share and that unite us. We will ensure that RSE is accessible to all pupils and is differentiated to take into account any additional learning needs.

9. Equality

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

10. Programme of Study (POS)

The Province recommends appropriate resources to its family of schools in Section 2.1 of the POS. These range from ages 3-19 years and provide suggested areas of study and outcomes for the young people it serves. It is envisaged that this programme will be taught in discrete lessons, in cross curricular lessons, particularly R.E. and science and fundamentally embedded in the ethos of the school through assemblies, classroom discussions and the centring of all relationships in school on the person of Jesus Christ. The programme of study is based on the understanding of the Church, of human nature and human sexuality, and aims to help young people develop their sense of purpose and character. It should be taught as part of a broad and balanced curriculum and will thus have room for the expression of alternative viewpoints by pupils.

RSE will be taught through a wide range of teaching strategies, with clear ground rules for discussions established. The diocesan Fertile Heart programme will be adopted and the delivery of the content in each key Stage will be complemented with additional resources from Ten Ten, such as interactive theatre days for Year Groups. Parents are involved throughout and informed when lessons are taking place and given the opportunity to view material used with the pupils. Supporting resources are also used.

Schools will monitor progress in understanding, linking with the R.E., P.S.E. and Science policies. Children's well-being will be monitored, for example, through a positive behaviour policy and/or encouraging children to be responsible for the choices they make.

11. Parents

The Church recognises parents as the first educators of their children. Our schools assist parents in this task also in RSE, aiding and completing (where needed) the work of parents and furnishing children and adolescents with an evaluation of "sexuality as value and task of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God". (Educational Guidance in Human Love (1983) Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education n69).

Children's first experience of relationships and love are in the home. At our school we seek to work with parents and support them as their children grow and begin to develop their own character as well as experiencing changes in their physical appearance.

Parents are informed of their right to withdraw their children from RSE lessons, (though they are not able to withdraw their children from statutory science lessons). However, at times, areas of particular sensitivity, such as puberty, letters will be sent home and parents may be invited into school to discuss the content of RSE lessons.

12. Teaching RSE

There is a named coordinator and a nominated Trustee who monitors the programme. All staff are involved in fostering attitudes, living Gospel virtues and shaping behaviour based on a Christian understanding of how to lead a good life. Staff are called to be role models of the school's ethos in their relationships with other staff members, their conduct towards parents and their care for the children in the school. Staff who are not Catholic themselves must conduct their behaviour in school in accordance with the vision and mission of the school.

Teaching and learning about human relationships will be part of the life of the school. However, the programme of study will be taught through cross curricular dimensions where appropriate, such as R.E., PSE, Science and IT.

Sometimes, the children's learning will be best supported by using other agencies, such as the school nurse, or other visitors to school. Such visitors will be guided to read the protocol for visitors to our school and will agree in writing to follow the instructions. The appropriate 'protocol' available on the CES website will be used for this purpose.

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

Like all other subjects, RSE always needs to be taught in a differentiated manner appropriate to the maturity of the children. It needs to be framed so that the young people who are participating know that there is pastoral support if any of the issues discussed make them feel the need to talk further or share confidential information. This should always be done within the safeguarding framework of the school and it is paramount that all staff teaching RSE have up to date safeguarding professional development.

Questions asked by students that are a cause for concern for the teacher, for example because of their explicit or graphic content, should be addressed in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and confidentiality procedures.

The following guidance for dealing with questions in teaching RSE will be followed:

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

- If a question is too personal, the teacher should remind the pupil of the ground rules. If the pupil needs further support, the teacher can refer her or him to the appropriate person, such as the school Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

If a teacher doesn't know the answer to a question, it is important to acknowledge this, and to suggest that the pupil or teacher or both together research the question later.

- If a question is too explicit, feels too old for a pupil, is inappropriate for the whole class, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should acknowledge it and promise to attend to it later on an individual basis. In this way, the pupil will feel they have been treated with respect, but the rest of the class will not have to listen to personal experience or inappropriate information. To maintain trust and respect the teacher must remember to talk with the pupil later; and
- If a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of sexual abuse, they should immediately report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and record it on MyConcern. At all times, they must follow the school's child protection and safeguarding procedures.

(RCADC Supplementary RSE Guidance available from the Cardiff Diocese)

“The Glory of God is man fully alive.”
(Saint Irenaeus of Lyons)