

St Mary's Primary School

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy



Article 3: adults should do what is best for children

Article 13: children have the right to find out things and share what they think with others, unless it harms or offends other people.

Article 16: children have the right to privacy.

Article 17: children have the right to get information that is important to their well-being. Adults should make sure that the information they are getting is not harmful and help them find and understand the information they need.

Article 19: children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.

Article 24: children have the right to the best health care possible, and information to help them stay well.

Article 28: children have the right to a good quality education.

Article 29: a child's education should help them respect other people.

Article 34: children have the right to be free from sexual abuse.

Article 36: children have the right to protection from any kind of exploitation

Reviewed	January 2025
Ratified	May 2025

MISSION STATEMENT

St Mary's Primary School is a Catholic school and as such the ethos of our school is concerned with fostering the development of relationships—the love of God and the love of every human being. The school dedicates itself to the education of the whole human being.

"The vision, the values, the human and Christian virtues, the revealed truths and the lived tradition which go to make up the Christian understanding of life cannot be taught without reference to sexuality and procreation and the responsible, respectful and loving use of these gifts of God." (Episcopal Commission for Catechetics)

Generally, home is the primary place for Relationships and Sexuality Education to take place. We wish to work with parents to ensure our children learn about relationships and sexuality in a safe space. Often the work carried out through the RSE Programme in school affords parents the opportunity to begin discussions with their children.

PURPOSE

All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and RSE plays an integral part. Health, education and social services professionals have identified a particular need for boys as well as girls to receive an adequate preparation for the emotional and physical changes at puberty. Many children are maturing earlier and it is therefore important that, with the agreement of parents, pupils are provided with appropriate factual information and have opportunities to discuss their feelings and concerns. This preparation should help pupils to be better able to manage the emotional and physical changes at puberty. RSE can have a positive effect on self-esteem. RSE is important in every year group, but particularly so at Key Stage 2.

We can help develop the self-esteem of pupils by creating a climate of trust and acceptance in which each person is valued and respected and encouraged to feel good about themselves. Pupils are encouraged to recognize their individual needs, to respect the needs and wants of others, and to develop the skills and self-esteem to become confident adolescents. RSE plays a part in increasing informed choice by providing opportunities for pupils to examine their own values and beliefs in the light of those held by others.

Deeper understanding of the values and beliefs that they hold can help pupils to clarify why they think and behave as they do, to separate fact from fiction, to recognize prejudice and to respect the views and feelings of others.

Some children may find it difficult to talk to their parents about growing up and about sexual matters. We can offer information and provide opportunities to consider feelings and concerns within a secure environment. We are always

mindful that, some pupils may have experienced sexual abuse. Through RSE and other related programmes we enable pupils to challenge inappropriate and unwanted attention from others.

RATIONALE

Our Mission Statement and the following policy document reflect the ethos of our school. We are a caring community with a sound value base. We wish to communicate the Christian vision of human life and human relationships. We want our children to understand more about themselves, others and the beauty of creation. We recognise our role in RSE as subsidiary to that of parents. As a Catholic school we reflect Catholic moral teaching. We respect the dignity, privacy and modesty of each individual child. We respect the sanctity of human life. We recognise that sexuality is a gift from God and that relationships should be based on love and self-giving. The virtues of modesty and chastity; the forming of conscience; the values of respect, trust, honesty and compassion; the importance of personal responsibility; marriage and the family; are all part of the Catholic vision of human life and are relevant to RSE in St Mary's.

Furthermore, the school recognises the importance of personal safety and the dangers of abuse in relation to RSE and reference should be made to our Drugs Education, Child Protection, Safeguarding and Child Protection and our Anti-Bullying Policies.

AIMS

The aims of RSE are to:

- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child
- help the child develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships
- foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, social and spiritual framework
- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make informed decisions
- help the child come to value family life
- appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood
- promote an appreciation of the value of human life and the wonder of birth
- form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework
- learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect
- build the foundations for developing more personal relationships in later life
- make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives
- help young people recognise their worth and dignity as children of God
- help young people celebrate the God-given gift and sanctity of life

- help young people to appreciate their uniqueness and full potential as human beings
- enable young people to understand that love is the central basis of all relationships
- help young people become more confident in listening and talking about relationships
- help young people to grow in their understanding of how to develop, nurture and sustain relationships thereby building up God's Kingdom here on earth
- encourage and promote a deep respect for women and men within the context of the school among staff, pupils and parents
- enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God
- know by name the various parts of the human body
- help young people recognise, understand and prepare for the body changes that they (and their friends) will undergo in the years ahead (puberty), or are possibly undergoing at the present time
- help pupils develop healthy lifestyles and learn how to keep themselves safe and to ask for help or advice when needed
- foster the growth of values which impact on moral behaviour personally and socially
- develop a respect for difference, gender and race

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to:

- acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth
- develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others
- understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts
- develop an awareness of differing family patterns
- develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity
- develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships
- develop some coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse
- acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction

- acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making

SKILLS

The RSE curriculum and other related disciplines will contribute toward enabling pupils to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and well-being. Pupils should also be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values.

They need opportunities to develop:

- **Practical skills** for everyday living; for supporting others; for future parenting
- **Communication skills**, learning to listen, listening to others' points of view; putting one's own view forward clearly and appropriately; giving and receiving feedback; handling and resolving conflict peacefully; being assertive
- **Decision-making and problem-solving skills**; for sensible choices made in the light of relevant information; making moral judgments about what to do in actual situations and putting these judgments into practice; acting responsibly and with initiative as an individual or as a member of a variety of groups
- **Inter-personal skills** for managing relationships confidently and effectively; for developing as an effective group member or leader

MORALS AND VALUES

RSE should enable pupils to clarify what they believe and why they believe it and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Pupils need opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how they, and others, are affected by them.

This policy complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

Religious Education

Positive Behaviour

Addressing Bullying Behaviour

Pastoral Care

Special Needs

Safeguarding Child Protection

Healthy Living, Food in School

E-Safety
ICT
PDMU
Drugs Education
PE
Complaints
Confidentiality

Special Needs

We are particularly mindful of the fact that physical development may outstrip emotional maturity in the case of pupils with Special Needs and to accommodate this disparity in class lessons and experiences.

DELIVERING THE RSE PROGRAMME

St Mary's P.S. has worked alongside the Catechetical Centre in Derry, our governors and the other local schools in the Sperrin Learning Community to review and develop an appropriate RSE Programme.

- Each class from P1 to P7 will be using the RSE scheme, Flourish, which has been ratified by the Catholic Bishops. Staff will share the content of these schemes prior to teaching them. Consent will be sought from parents for all children.
- Ms Coyle will talk to P6 and P7 girls on the topic of Period Dignity prior to the Love for Life P6 and P7 workshops. Consent will be sought from parents.
- The team at Love for Life will be supplementing the P6 and P7 programmes with workshops - Choices and Changes and What's Inside.
- Parents will have an opportunity to attend an information meeting with the Love for Life Team prior to the children's workshops.

This combination of these programmes ensures that the information the children receive is:

- Relevant and developmentally appropriate.
- Accessible and a positive experience.
- Factually accurate.

All materials used reflect the ethos of the school and will have been vetted by staff and Governors. Parents will always have access to the content of the programme prior to lessons being taught. Great care has been taken to ensure the content is age appropriate, inclusive and sensitive to the needs and experiences of all pupils.

Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the RSE Policy:

The policy will be reviewed by staff, parents and governors. St.Mary's Primary School staff are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this policy.

Specifically important to the RSE Programme are:

- Religious sensitivity within our Catholic School Ethos in St.Mary's Primary School
- pupil feedback
- staff review and feedback
- parental feedback
- further Departmental guidance and legislative changes

APPENDIX 1: USEFUL LOCAL ADDRESSES

Childcare Northern Ireland, 11 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1FY. Tel: (028) 9065 2713.

NSPCC, Jennymount Court, North Derby Street, Belfast, BT15 3HN. Tel: (028) 9035 1135.

Family Planning Association, 113 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HP. Tel: (028) 9032 5488.

Family Planning Association, 2nd Floor, Northern Counties Building, Custom House Square, Derry, BT48 6AE.

Tel: (028) 7126 0016.

Telephone helpline and advisory service providing advice and information on sexual issues. Also provides a non-directional unplanned pregnancy service. This voluntary agency also offers training for professionals.

Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPANI), 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HS.

Tel: (028) 9031 1611.

The Agency is a non-departmental public body whose remit in Northern Ireland is health promotion.

It carries out its work through providing public and professional information; training and professional development; research and evaluation; and policy development for health.

APPENDIX 2: USEFUL NATIONAL ADDRESSES

Childline UK, Freepost 1111, London, N1 OBR. Tel: (0800) 1111. A free national helpline for children with any problems.

Kidscape, 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0DH. Tel: (020) 7730 3300.

Glossary of Ecclesial Documents

CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992

CS: The Catholic School, Sacred Congregation For Catholic Education, 1977

CT: Catechesi Trandendae; On Catechesis in our Time, 1996

EGHL: Educational Guidance in Human Love, 1983

FC: Familiaris Consortio, 1981

GDC: General Directory for Catechesis, 1997

GE: Gravissimum Educationis ,Declaration on Christian Education, 1965)

HS: The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, 1995

RDEC: The Religious Dimension of a Catholic School, Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988

Irish Ecclesial Documents

CPPRECI: Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland, 2015

Guidelines on Relationships and Sexuality Education, Irish Episcopal Conference, 2014

LFL: Love is for Life, Pastoral letter of the Irish Episcopal Conference, 1985

SGN: Share the Good News National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland, 2010

Education Documents

CSRE: Joint Syllabus for Northern Ireland, 1996