



## Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy for the Senior School

### SCHOOL MISSION

We are inspired by St Catherine of Siena, who said 'Be who God wants you to be, and you will set the world on fire', to form young women of confidence and compassion, ready for service and leadership in the world. We fulfil our mission through these values:

**Community:** a place of cheerfulness, dignity and tolerance, where all are welcome

**Faith:** a Christ-centred school with time for reflection; a culture of gratitude and friendship

**Courage:** with self-knowledge, resilience and integrity, and a readiness for challenge

**Scholarship:** where gifts are developed through curiosity, imagination and ambition

**Service:** commitment to others, to stewardship, and to justice and hope for all

### 1: Introduction and statement of intent

The St Catherine's RSE Policy has been designed to fulfil our regulatory obligations to provide Relationships and Sex Education, our obligations as a Roman Catholic school and our moral duty to safeguard our pupils and prepare them for adult life in the twenty-first century.

We take as our guide the teachings of the Church and its ideals about love:

*'Loving another person involves the joy of contemplating and appreciating their innate beauty and sacredness, which is greater than my needs. This enables me to seek their good even when they cannot belong to me, or when they are no longer physically appealing but intrusive and annoying. For "the love by which one person is pleasing to another depends on his or her giving something freely." Pope Francis, Amoris laetitia, 2016*

As a Catholic School, the RSE Policy at St Catherine's has its basis in the following core principles:

- We want our pupils to understand that each life has a purpose, and is a gift, and to value themselves because they are made in the image and likeness of God; as part of

this, our pupils must learn to value themselves in the formation of good personal relationships and friendships.

- Our pupils should know how to protect themselves from emotional and physical harm, including in their relationships with others.
- We wish for our pupils to respect and love each other, as children of God, and to seek the virtues of forgiveness, honesty, kindness and mutual respect.
- We seek to foster in our pupils an understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church and the place of human sexuality in living a full life.
- We are created to live as part of a community - local, national and global - and our pupils should understand how to respect those with different beliefs, lifestyles and preferences to their own.

Within our teaching of Relationships and Sex Education, we are highly mindful in our policies and practice, of the context in which our pupils are growing up. As such, our lessons and PSHE scheme of work are informed by the following statements:

- Our pupils are encouraged to understand diversity in family structures, including same-sex relationships, and to be respectful of all those with whom they interact.
- We have pupils from a wide range of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.
- In addition to teaching pupils about the ideals of marriage and of loving and committed sexual relationships, we also seek to provide them with the knowledge and mindset needed to ensure safety in any physical or emotional choices they may make.
- We wish to lead pupils to a greater understanding of sexuality, including heterosexuality and homosexuality, and gender identity.
- Adolescence is a challenging time; it is important that pupils feel St Catherine's is a safe and non-judgmental space where they can share worries, receive support and be open in asking questions.
- With our emphasis on respecting the dignity of all individuals, we will inform our pupils about equality law and protected characteristics.
- We wish pupils to have the knowledge and understanding needed to face questions and make decisions about relationships, sex and sexuality, with confidence and good judgement; this includes the understanding and recognition of celibacy and chastity as fulfilling choices.
- Our pupils should be fully prepared for 21st-century adult life.

It is also recognised that high-quality RSE has significant relevance for ensuring the safeguarding of the pupils in our care.

## **2. Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy, we define RSE to mean learning about the physical, social, legal and emotional aspects of human relationships including friendships, intimate, sexual and committed relationships and family life. We also define sex education as learning about the physical, social, legal and emotional aspects of human sexuality and behaviour, including human reproduction. This includes conception and contraception, safer sex, sexually transmitted infections and sexual health.

This policy is closely linked to the Personal Development Policy, including the PSHE Scheme of Work, particularly in terms of health (both mental and physical).

This policy is also linked to:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Safeguarding Policy

### **3: Parents' rights**

We also recognise that parents are the first teachers of their children, and so place a high value on the School's partnership with parents in this aspect of education. Pope John Paul II reaffirmed the role of the family and this supportive relationship with schools, in *Familiaris Consortio*:

*"... any educative activity, related to education for love and carried out by persons outside the family, must be subject to the parents' acceptance of it and must be seen not as a substitute but as a support for their work. In fact, sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them..."*

Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they have any questions regarding the teaching of RSE.

Parents have the legal right to withdraw their daughter from sex education, but not relationships or health education, up to three terms before her 16th birthday. Parents should request the withdrawal of their daughter by contacting the Deputy Head Pastoral in writing, outlining the reasons for their request. The parents are likely then to be invited in for a discussion. Pupils within three terms of their 16th birthday may choose not to be withdrawn.

### **4: Gender Identity**

At St Catherine's we intend to address individual situations relating to gender identity in the same way we would with any other issue where a pupil asks for support or needs pastoral care. If staff become aware that there is a safeguarding concern behind issues relating to gender identity the DSL will be informed. Parents will usually be involved in discussions about the support provided for an individual pupil, and the School's Independent Listener may also be asked to offer support.

The Equality Act 2010 lists gender reassignment as a protected characteristic, and it is therefore unlawful for schools to treat pupils less favourably because of their gender reassignment. The law recognises that any decision can be manifested as physical, medical, social and/or personal reassignment. In order to be protected by the Equality Act 2010, "a pupil will not necessarily have to be undertaking a medical procedure to change their sex but must be taking steps to live in the opposite gender, or proposing to do so".

The School also recognises the need to ensure that pupils who identify as having a gender different from their legal one are protected from discrimination, and will at all times abide by the requirements of the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

The School will continue to use the name and gender on the pupil's birth certificates, in formal documentation, unless and until there is a change in legal name and/or gender. A change of legal gender is only possible for individuals over 18 who meet the criteria for a Gender Recognition Certificate.

**Principles and processes:** The School will distinguish between respecting an individual's civil right to adopt their personal gender identity and its policy to use their legal name and gender in formal situations, and formal documentation, including that which is made public. If a pupil adopts a gender identity different from their legal gender, this will be explained to them.

A review of the needs of the pupil and the School's wider responsibilities will take place.

Pastoral staff would engage with any pupil considering gender issues in the same way as they would with any issue relating to a pupil's wellbeing. A period of listening, reflection and pastoral support may be followed by help from external agencies. Our aims are to be supportive and compassionate, and to work in partnership with each pupil and her parents, to identify the most appropriate forms of pastoral support.

**Staff Training and Guidance:** Staff guidance will focus on preventing discrimination, and on providing support based on individual needs, with the School's values as their guide. Staff training will respect the privacy of individual pupils.

It is possible that a member of staff could, without intending to cause upset of any kind, refer to a pupil by a gender different from the one by which they identify. An instance where this occurs should not be assumed to be a deliberate action on the member of staff's part.

## 5. The creation of this policy and ongoing review

This policy was created using the findings and discussions of a staff working party, drawing on:

- an awareness of the kind of questions St Catherine's pupils tend to put forward;
- a range of CPD courses, including both faith and non-faith perspectives;
- policy review and discussion with School Governors;
- their experience of delivering RSE at St Catherine's and in other settings.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Deputy Head Pastoral. This review process will take into account pupil, teacher and parent feedback. Where necessary, revisions will be carried out between annual reviews in order to ensure this policy remains fully relevant and effective.

## 6. RSE content to be covered in lessons

Our Scheme of Work is based on two key strands:

- Me and my relationships with others;
- My rights in relationships and how I can keep myself safe.

The table below gives an overview of what will be taught to each year group. Sessions will be delivered throughout the year, taking into account the development of pupil's maturity and readiness to encounter more complex topics. A flexible approach will be taken to allow topics to be brought forward or delayed in order to best serve the pupils and their needs; such adjustments will be discussed and agreed by the Pastoral Team, and the Deputy Head Pastoral will maintain oversight.

	<b>Me and my relationships with others</b>	<b>My rights in relationships and how I can keep myself safe</b>
<b>Year 7</b>	Emotional literacy & intelligence Personal space - emotional & physical How we manage emotions, including the role of prayer Family relationships, friendly relationships; building blocks of courtesy, forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion, loyalty, respect, honesty, integrity Context of relationships and individual dignity as presented by the Catholic Church Differing kinds of love and relationships: family, friendly, romantic Divided families and different families models (same-sex, single parents, extended families living together) Negotiating & communicating with others, how to express ideas & how to manage friendships when there is disagreement, including changing friendships, banter/bullying Bullying Virtues & attitudes, creating a sense of purpose, promoting & enhancing the dignity and self-worth of others, including positive body image Being one's best self	Privacy settings on social media
<b>Year 8</b>	How to be our best selves; self-esteem and how it links to relationships	Sexual rights & responsibilities: age of consent and the laws around this; safer sex

	<p>Friendships, including online bullying</p> <p>How to help others be their best selves</p> <p>Sexual identity and diversity of sexuality</p> <p>Context of School Mission - cheerfulness, dignity, tolerance;</p> <p>Positive &amp; negative relationships, what to do if you're worried</p>	<p>and personal health issues (HPV vaccination, smear tests, basic introduction to STIs)</p> <p>Beauty of relationships and sexuality as part of God's plan for His people;</p>
<b>Year 9</b>	<p>Coping with rejection</p> <p>Relationships with your family</p> <p>Assertiveness</p> <p>Dealing with loss, including relationship resilience</p> <p>Context of School Mission and Catholic faith - role of reflection and prayer; focus on support for others</p> <p>Difference between sexuality and sensuality</p> <p>Being our best selves</p> <p>Body image</p>	<p>Youth produced sexual images (police talk)</p> <p>Contraception, including natural contraceptive methods, &amp; STIs</p> <p>Sexual rights, including consent and the right to chastity (reference back to laws regarding online sexual behaviour)</p> <p>How to protect your sexual rights, and being aware of contexts where it may become harder to exert them</p> <p>Taking responsibility for own choices and resisting peer pressure</p> <p>Sexting, images, introductory discussion of pornography (what is, the laws surrounding it)</p> <p>Online relationships</p>
<b>Year 10</b>	<p>Counselling skills</p>	<p>Safe choices in relationships; the implications of unsafe choices; who to turn to when things go wrong</p> <p>Recap and develop discussion of pornography, impact on expectations of women</p> <p>Safer sex &amp; contraception</p> <p>RAP project: consent, sexual violence, women's rights (with follow up in Form Time)</p> <p>Context of justice and fairness for all people</p>
<b>Year 11</b>	<p>Marriage &amp; commitment, quality of relationships</p> <p>Context of self-knowledge, and commitment to others</p>	<p>Parenthood &amp; planning, external provider re abortion</p> <p>Safer sex, including reference to women's health (breasts, smears, GPs, sexual health clinics, menopause)</p>

The majority of the RSE Scheme of Work will be delivered during regular timetabled PSHE lessons. A team of staff have received training in order to deliver the more sensitive or complex elements of the Scheme of Work. Other sections will be delivered by Form Tutors, although no member of staff will be required to teach anything with which they feel

uncomfortable. At all times staff should model tolerance and respect for the dignity of the individual, both in terms of the pupils with whom they are working and those members of the wider society who may have differing views or beliefs of their own. At all times staff should be mindful of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and in particular the clauses relating to protected characteristics.

Occasionally topics will be delivered via a trusted external provider. Any such sessions will be carefully agreed in terms of content and nature of delivery.

Pupils will be given regular opportunities to put forward their own questions and share any worries they have, either within lessons or by speaking with a member of staff individually. Should a pupil ever present a question relating to RSE that seems inappropriate for their age, and that of their peers, or that indicates the pupils may be at risk, the teacher to whom it is directed should consult the Deputy Head Pastoral for guidance. At all times the need to protect pupils outweighs any desire they might have for confidentiality, and staff should proceed with due regard to the Safeguarding Policy and KCSIE 2024.

## **7. Accessibility**

RSE teaching will be appropriately differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND.

Occasionally the school will be aware of wider pastoral or safeguarding matters which may mean aspects of the RSE Policy could be particularly emotionally challenging for a pupil. In such a case, an individualised plan will be devised by the key teachers around the pupil (most likely Form Tutor, Pastoral Head and DSL) and it may be that she is offered the opportunity to choose whether to attend certain lessons. Any such decision will be made in consultation with her parents, as appropriate.

**Last review: September 2024**

**Next review: September 2025**