

*St. Joseph's Catholic School & Sixth Form Centre*

Ysgol Gatholig San Joseff

## **Relationships & Sex Education Policy**



### **RSE Policy**

Signed by Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 10/07/2024

## **Introduction**

The policy has been created using Archdiocesan policy templates for Secondary schools. It has been customised to suit the needs of our community and pupils and community. The policy was created following consultation with parents, pupils, staff and governors.

## **Vision and Mission**

As a Church school, our mission is to journey with Christ putting him at the centre of everything we do. We believe that Jesus is ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ and that we live life to the fullest when we follow him and show others the way to Christ.

As Catholic educators the teachings of Christ are at the centre of our mission and our guide and compass in our journey. Christ’s living examples of unconditional care (Parable of the Lost Sheep), concern for the least well-off (The Good Samaritan), and responsibility to themselves and others and to the Common Good (Parable of the Talents) will be widely shared and related to our lives today.

Monsignor Marcus Stock (*Christ at the Centre, 2012*) states that the purpose of a Catholic school is fourfold and St. Joseph’s Catholic School and Sixth Form Centre will endeavour to fulfil these purposes at all times.

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*To assist in its mission of making Christ known to all people;*

*To assist parents, who are the primary educators of their children, in the education and religious formation of their children;*

*To be at the service of the local Church - the diocese, the parish and the Christian home;*

*To be “a service to society”*

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A flourishing Catholic educational community reflects:

- The belief that the human person is holy ground; each human being is created uniquely in the image of God and we must seek to acknowledge and treasure the unique gifts that each pupil and member of staff brings;
- Openness to the creative action of the Holy Spirit by nurturing and developing the God-given talents that each member of our school has;
- The principles and ethos of Catholic Social Teaching and a commitment to uphold the dignity of each person, to work for the common good, to care for creation and the environment, and to promote social justice and opportunities for all;
- A duty to care for those in our school community who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged in line with Catholic Social Teaching;
- An integral and holistic approach to educating 'the whole person' and to work closely with parents as the first educators of their children in a search for excellence;
- The joyful celebration of our faith through our shared experience of prayer, liturgy and the sacramental life of the Church, and in partnership with local parishes;
- A celebration of our vocation as people of God underpinned by the attitudes and values defined by the Beatitudes and included in the Jesuit Pupil Profile;



- A search for excellence in all aspects of school life as defined by the four purposes in *Successful Futures* and that are instrumental in the development of pupils' vocation to help create;

**ambitious,  
capable**

**learners** who are ready to learn throughout their lives, making the most of their gifts and talents.

**enterprising,  
creative**

**contributors** who are ready to answer their vocations and play a full part in life and work.

**healthy,  
confident**

**individuals** who are ready and committed to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.



**ethical, informed  
citizens** who

understand and appreciate their call to stewardship and are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world.

- A commitment to care for the well-being of both pupils and staff, to journey with them in their spiritual quest and to support the professional development of staff;
- A reflective and learning environment where the success and achievements of both pupils and staff are cherished, celebrated and offered to God in thanksgiving.

In a successful Catholic school pupils and staff experience a foretaste of the kingdom of God in action where gospel values are not only taught through the RE curriculum, but also practised in daily life; modelled by the attitudes and behaviour of all staff, they

permeate our relationships with one another across the whole community. Our horizontal (pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher) and vertical (teacher to pupil, pupil to teacher) relationships should reflect the love exemplified by Christ. One measure of the success of St. Joseph's is that the gospel values of agape love, forgiveness, sacrifice, perseverance, hope and joy are internalised so that pupils will live by them after they leave school, make a positive difference to society and fulfil their vocation to the fullest. In this way they will be instrumental in showing others the kingdom of God in action and live happy and fulfilled lives.

Just as the gospels do not present us with a utopian world, St. Joseph's faces a number of challenges. Here Christ journeys with us and our mission is to accompany young people in their joys and sorrows and to listen to them. Challenging behaviour must be evaluated explicitly in terms of gospel values since it is often indicative of underlying issues; young people must be treated with respect and listened to with empathy and compassion. At the same time, young people need to be encouraged to reflect on whether their attitudes and behaviour show the gospel values of kindness, understanding and compassion towards others. Another challenge is the rise in the number of pupils that suffer from mental health issues which, according to psychologists, often stem from having to cope with complex problems presented to them. An increasing proportion of young people are experiencing different 'crises' simultaneously, i.e. family breakdown, caring for a sick parent, economic pressures, stress and anxiety over exams, etc. Our response must be always based on the model set by Christ, working compassionately with those who suffer.

Pope Francis writes *"Do not be disheartened in the face of the difficulties that the educational challenge presents! Educating is not a profession but an attitude, a way of being; in order to educate it is necessary to step out of ourselves and be among young people to accompany them in the stages of their growth. Give them hope and optimism for their journey in the world. Teach them to see the beauty and goodness of creation. The sole objective of the educating community is to develop mature young people who are simple, competent and honest, who know how to live life as a response to God's call, and their future profession as a service to society."*

Despite these difficulties and obstacles, St. Joseph's will remain fully committed to follow the teachings and values of Jesus Christ in all aspects of school life.

Our sexuality is a gift from God. We are all children of God created in his image and able to know the beauty, goodness and truth of the Church's teaching on love and sexuality. Our aim is to equip our learners with a solid foundation of moral principles so that they can appreciate the Church's teaching about how to live a fulfilled life, and a life of dignity and integrity as they grow into young adults. Such strong foundation will also help our learners to acknowledge, recognise and respond to the complexities of personal and sexual relationships in an increasingly secular world.

*"We may well ask ourselves if our educational institutions have taken up this challenge. It is not easy to approach the issue of sex education in an age when sexuality tends*

*to be trivialized and impoverished. It can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving. In such a way, the language of sexuality would not be sadly impoverished but illuminated and enriched.” (Amoris Laetitia, 280)*

## **Procedures**

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

- Staff
- Governing Body
- Parents
- Diocesan Education Service
- Pupil Voice
- School Chaplain??

In consultation with the Governing Body, the policy was implemented in \*\*\*\*\* It will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher, RSE Coordinator, the Governing Body and school staff.

The policy will be circulated to all members of the Governing Body and all members of staff. Copies of the document will be available to all parents through the school's website and a copy is available in the school office. Details of the content of the RSE curriculum will also be published on the school's web site. The Diocesan Director of Education 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.

## **Rationale**

As a Catholic Secondary school in the Province of Cardiff, Menevia, Wrexham and Herefordshire we use the term Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) as we believe that sex education is set within a wider context of relationship education, which itself is about all aspects of growing a fulfilled and happy life. This is why the Diocesan RSE Curriculum, based on the CES 'Model Curriculum', organizes content in the three overarching themes of 'Created to love by God', 'Created to love one another' and 'Created to live in community'. Sex education in the narrower sense is but one dimension of this greater whole.

The defining belief of Christianity is that God took 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 but infused with 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 educates young people as it is part of complete human formation. Education about human love is no less a part of a Catholic school's responsibility than teaching about any other curriculum subject. At Bishop Vaughan School, we teach young people about how to form relationships, including understanding loving relationships and acknowledging that young people's first experience of love is in the home. We encourage the young people in our school to recognise that they are all children of God and that each person shares a God given dignity. As they 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). We also encourage young people to know that God's love for humanity is so great, he is waiting to forgive us.

*"We are all sinners, but God heals us with an abundance of grace and mercy."* Pope Francis

This is the basis for all relationships in our school and this is supported by Christian virtue teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

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 as they grow about their relationships and well-being, including sexual health.

The Province supports 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 our Diocesan 'RSE Toolkit' and CES Guidance.

## **Statutory framework**

The statutory framework around education about human relationships varies between England and Wales. The relevant documents for our context can be found here:

RSE statutory guidance for Wales:

[https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-and-code\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-05/consultation-document-relationships-and-sexuality-education-guidance-and-code_0.pdf)

The guidance relating to Phase 3 applies to our school as an 11-18 secondary school.

## **Virtues and Values**

Gospel virtues and values underpin the RSE curriculum. The Christian tradition describes 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 (sometimes 'love' is used instead of '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). Our schools use the 'Catholic Pupil Profile' as our main tool for formation in virtue in an educational setting.

At St Joseph's staff and students are encouraged to practise the virtues of the 'Jesuit Pupil Profile', and we celebrate our commitment to Gospel values in daily classroom prayer, assemblies and liturgies. All pupils start with a collective act of worship either in form time or assembly. On Mondays, pupils are encouraged to reflect on the previous Sunday's Gospel with a link to the virtues, and the Examen is the focus of Friday's morning prayers. Pupils are given opportunities to learn how prayer enables them to make space for God in their lives and to grow in their love of God and neighbour.

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.

## **The Aim and Objectives of RSE**

The aim of RSE is part of our aim to educate the complete human person:

*"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, and respect and love of self;
- To invite young people to develop and deepen a loving relationship with God;
- To invite young people to understand that their life has a purpose;
- 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.

To achieve these aims:

- 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.
- We will foster an atmosphere in school which celebrates the work of the Trinity through the life of the school and its relationship with the Church.
- We will teach children about the beauty of the Church's teaching about love and God's love for them which is shared in the Sacraments.
- We will sensitively share the Church's understanding of the nature of intimacy and the importance of marriage and family life as a way to live in loving relationships with others and with God.
- We will seek to develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity of all.
- We will seek to enable students to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.
- We will encourage students to learn about expressing their own emotions and being respectful of the emotions and behaviour of others.
- We will 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.
- We will encourage everyone in the school to recognise their part in the school family and work together for reconciliation when relationships in the school falter.

- We will encourage everyone in the school to value humility, mercy and compassion and to respond with empathy to the problems of others.
- We will develop students' knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for managing their own risk.
- We will develop students' experience of what it is to be truly happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and gratification, satisfying the spirit rather than the senses.
- We will teach them the virtue of patience.
- We will teach students about the media and how to make good choices about: what to watch; what games to play; what rules apply, especially when using social media; and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.
- We will encourage students to develop a healthy, good moral framework about accessing information online.
- We will encourage students to recognise the influence of peer pressure and the moral integrity required to say "no".
- We will support students 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.
- We will teach students about the damage that drugs, alcohol and promiscuity do to relationships with the self, as well as others.
- We will teach young people that God is merciful and always waiting for us to be reconciled with him.

## **Inclusivity**

At St Joseph's, we identify that young people mature in different ways. Our teaching about relationships and sexuality is respectful of each child's starting point, their faith, culture, background, and sexual orientation. Lessons are framed by this understanding and young people encouraged to respect each other in their differences, and develop an approach of dialogue. We recognise that it is the teacher's responsibility to meet the needs of all pupils in their class through their classroom organisation, teaching materials, teaching style and differentiation. While the teaching materials given to the pupils are common to all classes, the teaching team will adapt them as necessary to meet the needs of learners in the classroom.

The ALN provision across the school is available for guidance for staff and for learners to seek additional support should any issue present itself at any point within the programme. This may be a counselling session, a meeting with the school nurse, or referrals following a disclosure.

## **Equality**

The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that St Joseph's 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.

Additional details of our commitment to equality at our school can be found in our Strategic Equality Policy on our website.

## **Programme of Study**

The Province recommends appropriate resources to its family of schools. 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 discreet lessons, particularly R.E., science and PSE, 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. It will also be cross-curricular in nature covering the AoLEs of Health and Well-being, Science and Technology, Humanities coordinated by the Head of RE/RSE Lead. 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 allow children to express alternative viewpoints where they hold such views.

At St Joseph's, RSE will be taught using a variety of teaching strategies (audio-visual presentations, question and answer, discussions, reflection time, guest speakers) in order to maximise learners' engagement and outcomes. The programme will be delivered by a specialist team of staff from the RE department and form teachers. Ground rules conducive to an inclusive and respectful environment will be discussed with learners and adopted as a 'code of practice'. The materials will always be age-appropriate and sensitive towards the individual needs and concerns of learners. We will encourage the use of appropriate biological terminology and honest and mature discussions. At the same time, we will discourage any disposition to immaturity, insensitivity or lack of respect toward personal and family situations. All staff are experienced practitioners and will always take account of the safeguarding policy.

We have adopted the Ten Ten programme of study, which has been adapted and differentiated to meet the needs of the learners at our school. All parents will be given access to the Parent Portal supplied by Ten Ten. The programme of study offers a 'spiral curriculum' where themes, topics and concepts are revisited so that learners can broaden and deepen their learning. Baseline assessments will be used to monitor progress and the use of questioning will be indicative of learners' progress on the

learning strands of relationships and identity, sexual health and well-being and empowerment, safety and respect. Progress will be assessed in connection with the 'Statements of what matters' from the Health and Well-Being AoLE. These are:

1. Developing physical health and well-being has lifelong benefits.
2. How we process and respond to our experiences affects our mental health and emotional well-being.
3. Our decision-making impacts on the quality of our lives and the lives of others.
4. How we engage with social influences shapes who we are and affects our health and well-being.
5. Healthy relationships are fundamental to our well-being.

[\(https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/statements-of-what-matters/\)](https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being/statements-of-what-matters/)

Information about the programme and learners' progress can be shared with parents in Parents' Evenings.

## **Parents/Guardians**

The Church recognises parents as the first educators of their children. Our schools exist to assist parents in this task, which includes RSE. The role of the school is thus that of assisting and completing (where needed) the work of parents, 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 n. 69). Children's first experience of relationships and love are in the home. At our schools 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 have been consulted about the programme after it was ratified by the governing body. The policy will be shared with parents via our usual method of communication. Parents are also invited to TenTen Parents' sessions.

Parents are informed of their right to withdraw their children from RSE lessons, or request their withdrawal, where such a right exists. Where such a right does no longer exists (as under the provisions of the 'Curriculum for Wales'), particular care has been taken to ensure that dialogue and involvement of parents is a priority concern of the school. The right to withdraw has been removed from Year 7 and Year 8, and will be removed on a rolling basis as follows:

Year 9: September 2024

Year 10: September 2025

Year 11: September 2026

The school will involve and support parents in learning about RSE by providing parents with access to the 'Parent Portal' at the Ten Ten website and sharing classroom resources, where requested. Parents are informed about the RSE programme and the RSE Co-ordinator welcomes discussions with parents when concerns are raised.

Information about RSE is contained in the school website and the majority of the programme of study is developed through the ethos of the school. However, at times, areas of particular sensitivity, such as puberty, will benefit from additional parental support. At such times, letters will be sent home and parents may be invited into school to discuss the content of RSE lessons.

## **Teaching RSE**

The RSE Coordinator at St Joseph's is Dr Maria Paz Felton, who is therefore responsible for the leadership, coordination and monitoring of the RSE programme. This monitoring process is on-going, but a formal review will take place on an annual basis. This will be done in conjunction with the Headteacher and Governing Body.

At KS3 RSE will be taught through a combination of a fortnightly PSE lesson delivered by form tutors and RE lessons in the summer term.

At KS4 RSE will be taught through their RE lessons linked to the GCSE specification, for example the Relationships theme in Unit 3. Years 12 and 13 will be taught RSE through their General RE sessions.

Arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis.

On occasions external agencies and speakers may be invited to speak to pupils on RSE related topics; these include the school nurse, community police liaison officer, etc. Any external agency will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at St Joseph's Catholic Comprehensive and Sixth Form Centre and will agree in writing to follow the instructions. The 'protocol' available on the CES website will be used for this purpose.

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 will conduct their behaviour in school in accordance with the vision and mission of the school.

## **Supporting children and young people deemed to be at risk**

The Governing Body desires that RSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where students experience a growing appreciation for their well-being, and that of others, and a deeper understanding that the Church teaches a path of wholeness of mind, body and spirit. 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. Part of this is creating an atmosphere where questions can be asked openly, knowing that their questions will be answered and knowing that these questions will not be judged negatively by staff or other students. It is vital, therefore, that time is invested in creating this framework of mutual trust and care, whilst respecting personal information. The RSE Coordinator must be given access to support and training to facilitate teachers to enable such discussions by creating carefully negotiated ground rules and distancing strategies.

The following guidance for dealing with questions in RSE will be adhered to:

*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 a school counsellor, school nurse, 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 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 follow the school's child protection procedures.

(DfE Sex and Relationships Guidance, 4.5 'Dealing with questions' 0116/2000)

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, which can be found on the school website.

The school will ensure that this policy is available for all staff, governors, parents and students and the confidential nature of how to obtain advice and guidance as a result of any issues or questions that may arise.

Students will be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers about issues and questions that arise as part of the programme. It will be made clear to all that unconditional confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where illegal or abusive concerns come to light and these will be dealt with under the terms of the school's Safeguarding Policy.