



RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

Christ is our teacher.

At St Bernard's we believe that all persons are created by God, unique and equal. We strive to create a caring Christian community in which we provide education based on Gospel values where all people reach their full potential. We aim to develop positive relationships with every individual and family, the parishes and the wider community.

"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full"

John 10:10

Reviewed by:	K Graham, Vice Principal), July 2025
Reviewed by:	A Riding (Principal), June 2025
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Signed:	Sue Kelly, Chair of Governors

ST BERNARD'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

Our society is challenging for young people today. With inequalities around race, gender and sexuality, increased levels of anxiety and depression, complex family dynamics and a pandemic of external influences (both on and offline) the need for our children to have a strong, moral framework to guide their decisions is greater than ever.

In this Policy the Governors and teachers, in partnership with pupils and their parents, set out the important intentions for the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) programme at St Bernard's Catholic High School. This Policy aims to explain the rationale for, and the approach to, RSE both through teaching lessons and the wider, pastoral dimensions of school life.

Guiding our vision and rationale for RSE is the profound message within the School's Mission Statement:

At St Bernard's we believe that all persons are created by God, unique and equal. We strive to create a caring Christian community in which we provide education based on Gospel values where all people reach their full potential. We aim to develop positive relationships with every individual and family, the parishes and wider community.

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full' John, 10:10

The selection of content and resources for the RSE programme have been carefully considered so children can reflect, discuss and ask questions about life-affirming topics in a safe and secure environment. At times they may find topics challenging or even hard to grasp, however, throughout all dialogue the Gospel values of 'having life to the full' and to 'love your neighbour' will be promoted as key messages for guidance: students must appreciate that every human person is worthy of love and, through God, they can discover the deeper meaning to life and how to achieve happiness and fullness in the life they desire.

DEFINING RELATIONSHIP AND SEX EDUCATION

The DfE guidance states that "children and young people need to know how to be safe and healthy, and how to manage their academic, personal and social lives in a positive way"¹

The RSE programme aims to do this through the development of:

- The students' knowledge and understanding of themselves as sexual beings,
- The understanding of what it means to be fully human,
- The understanding of how we are called to live in right, and loving relationships with self and others,
- The skills to make moral decisions in conscience.

St Bernard's Catholic High School wants to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. The RSE programme should enable students to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. It will also cover contraception, developing intimate relationships and resisting pressure to have sex (and not applying pressure).

STATUTORY CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

We are legally required to teach those aspects of RSE which are statutory parts of National Curriculum Science. (There is also a separate requirement for maintained secondary schools to teach about HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted infections).

However, at St Bernard's we aim to take our programme further to ensure all children can have a life to the full. See below.

¹ Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers, Page 4

RATIONALE

St Bernard's rationale for the RSE programme is defined in the guiding quote of our mission statement, that from John 10:10 "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full".

All teaching, delivery, discussions and debate will lead back to the important Christian belief that life is God-given, is a unique gift, and must be received with dignity, value and worth. As a Christian community we are involved in relationships and sex education because we are a reflection of God's personhood, created Imago Dei (In God's image and likeness). We will present all aspects of the RSE programme within this positive Christian context.

As a consequence of the Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, and reflect God's beauty and divine creativity. RSE, therefore, will be placed firmly within the context of 'relationship' as it is there that sexuality grows and develops.

Following the guidance of the Bishops of England and Wales and as advocated by the DFE (and the Welsh Assembly Government) RSE will be firmly embedded in the PSHE framework at St Bernard's as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils. All RSE will be in accordance with the Church's moral teaching. It will emphasise the central importance of marriage and the family whilst acknowledging that all pupils have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from. It will also prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

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 in responding 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 in each learning session across all year groups: faithfulness, fruitfulness, chastity, integrity, prudence, mercy and compassion.

INCLUSION AND DIFFERENTIATION LEARNING

We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to pupils' different abilities, age, 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 pupils 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.

DELIVERY OF THE PROGRAMME

St Bernard's is unwavering in its vision for the RSE programme to be embedded within all we teach, discuss and do. We aim to deliver a fully integrated and holistic programme through the key facets of school life:

- Through discrete, delivery of lessons (1 x half termly during PD Hour)
- Through a cross-curricular dimension so that Christian ideals can be reinforced within relevant parts of the wider national curriculum
- Through the wider whole-school life and ethos

Specifically, the curriculum programme will be supported through resources and lessons called 'Life to the Full' created by a faith inspired organisation called TenTen (www.tentenresources.co.uk). These lessons are based on 'A Model Catholic RSE Curriculum' by the Catholic Education Service, which is highlighted as good practice by the DFE.

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The three modules which will be taught to students include:

- Created and loved by God
- Created to Love others
- Created to Live in Community

Teaching will include allocated curriculum time each half term. Students will experience RSE lessons in tutor groups, taught by their form tutor which is a key source of pastoral support in the educational journey. We believe that the controlled environment of the classroom is the safest place for this curriculum to be followed.

Strategies to secure successful teaching and learning will include: Establishing clear, respectful group rules for discussion, discussion and group work, brainstorming, reflections, role play and film and video.

CONTROVERSIAL AND SENSITIVE ISSUES

The Governors want to promote a healthy, positive atmosphere in which RSE can take place where students can ask questions safely and know their questions will be answered free from bullying or harassment.

There will always be sensitive or controversial issues in the field of RSE. These may be a matter of maturity, personal involvement or experience of children, or a disagreement with Church teaching. The use of ground rules, negotiated between teachers and pupils, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion.

Additionally, given the nature of RSE topics, teachers will at all times operate within the expectations of the Safeguarding Children Policy.

PARENTS AND CARERS

We recognise that parents, carers and guardians are the primary educators of their children. To secure an effective working partnership, we will support parents/carers/guardians in the following ways:

The following communication will take place with parents throughout the RSE teaching programme:

- Parents will have access to the parent portal of the 'Life to the Full' programme which will enable them to assess the resources and lessons which their child will experience.
- Parents/carers will be informed through the School website, and text/letter, when the more sensitive aspects of RSE are being covered so they can talk to, and answer questions about, their children's learning.
- Parents will be informed of the content their child has covered through the Academic Mentoring reports as well as an AtL grade which represents their child's engagement in the programme.
- Parents will be consulted within the monitoring, review and evaluation of the RSE programme.
- Parents will be welcome to communicate with, and receive individual support from, the School's RSE Senior lead.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from Sex Education except in those elements which are required by the National Curriculum science orders. Withdrawal requests must be made to the Principal in writing.²

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING RSE

RSE is an integrated approach within St Bernard's and its wider community. All key stakeholders have specific roles within this:

Governors

Governors have a lead role in the Policy principles, its content (e.g. ensuring coverage of relevant National Curriculum Science topics and the setting of RSE within PSHE), monitoring and reviewing its impact.

² Please refer to the DfE guidance, Page 17 for further details on the right to be excused from sex education (commonly referred to as the right to withdraw).

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In consultation with the parents and teachers, the Governors must ensure a policy is available and in accordance with other related whole school policies (SEN, Positive Discipline, Safeguarding). Governors must ensure parents know their right to withdraw their children from the programme.

Principal

The Principal takes overall delegated responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for liaison with the Governing Body, parents, the Diocesan Schools' Service and the Local Education Authority, also appropriate agencies.

RSE Co-ordinator (SLT Lead)

The Co-ordinator, with the Principal, 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 training.

All Staff

RSE is a whole school duty. All staff have a responsibility of care and act as role models; as well as fostering academic progress they must actively contribute to the guardianship and guidance of the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of their pupils.

Teachers will be expected to teach RSE in accordance with the Catholic Ethos of the school. Appropriate training will be made available for all staff teaching RSE. All staff have been included in the development of this policy and all staff must be aware of the policy and how it relates to them.

External Visitors

Our school will often call upon help and guidance from outside agencies and health specialists to deliver aspects of RSE. Such visits will always complement the current programme and never substitute or replace teacher led sessions.

External visitors will be clearly aware of their role and responsibility whilst they are in school delivering a session. All visitors must adhere to our External Visitors Code of Practice. They will ensure that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice.³

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The RSE Co-ordinator will monitor the provision of the programme by examining plans, schemes of work, samples of student work, and student and parent voice. The programme will be evaluated through the school's Quality Assurance system and its impact reported back to key groups; staff, parents and Governors. Governors will consider all evaluations before amending the policy.

³ See CES guidance 'Checklist for External Speakers to Schools' 2016