

Bishop Vaughan Catholic School

Relationships and Sex Education Policy

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Policy



“I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.” John 10v10

Vision and Mission

At Bishop Vaughan Catholic School, we are inspired by Jesus to lead lives that are purposeful and enable us to fulfil our talents. We care for one another and show mutual respect and love through our relationships with one another. Jesus is invited into our lives. In the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to lead a full life with him by explaining what makes people blessed or happy. Through this we grow in our understanding of how loving our neighbour enables us to be fulfilled too. Such fulfillment can only be truly achieved when we have a good relationship with ourselves, recognising our God-given dignity, which enables us to enter into relationships with other people in our lives, which help us grow and flourish, and we respect that everyone is a unique and beautiful part of God's creation. We are all children of God, created equal and called to grow in love for him through the person of Jesus Christ and to spread the Good News through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are gifted with the love of God and the ability to love others. Our sexuality is part of our total self-gift of the heart and we seek to bring the young people in our care to know the beauty, goodness and truth of the Church's teaching about how to lead a fulfilled life, a life of integrity and wholeness of body, spirit and mind as they grow and change from children into young adults.

Procedures

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

- staff
- governing body
- parents
- Archdiocesan Education Service
- School Chaplain
- Pupil Voice

In consultation with the Governing Body, the policy was implemented in 2022, and is reviewed annually by the Head teacher, RSE Co-ordinator, the Governing Body and school Staff. The next review date is October 2026.

The policy will be circulated to all members of the Governing Body and all members of staff. The school prospectus should contain a statement about RSE teaching and details of where to obtain a full copy of the policy upon request. The Archdiocesan 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.

Rationale

As a Catholic Secondary school in the Province of Cardiff, Menevia, Wrexham and Herefordshire we use the term Relationship 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 Archdiocesan

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 CBEW 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:

- a) RSE statutory guidance for Wales:

[https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/cross-cutting-themes-for-designing-your-curriculum/#relationships-and-sexuality-education-\(rse\):-statutory-guidance](https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/cross-cutting-themes-for-designing-your-curriculum/#relationships-and-sexuality-education-(rse):-statutory-guidance)

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.

We celebrate our commitment to the Gospel values as a community in daily classroom prayer and in a variety of assemblies, events and liturgies. All pupils start each day by participating in a collective act of worship which takes place either in the Main Hall, the Year Base or the classroom. Prayers are said regularly throughout the day. Holy Mass, or an alternative liturgy, takes place during one morning each week and provides an opportunity for quiet witness. Major feast days of the church are celebrated in school. This provision is part of our programme to help our students to reflect upon their spiritual and faith journey in a peaceful and supportive atmosphere. Additionally, our school's mission is rooted in the teaching of Christ and finds its basis in the Gospel values. These are drawn from the Beatitudes, Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Pupils will see these in every book so that we all come to know the values well and to live them consistently. The values we draw from the Beatitudes are Faithfulness and Integrity, Dignity and Compassion, Humility and Gentleness, Truth and Justice, Forgiveness and Mercy, Purity & Holiness, Tolerance and Peace, Service and Sacrifice.

We aim to live by these values at all times in our school community. All staff model Gospel values and virtues, and our learners are encouraged to do the same as they progress through their school journey. We fulfil the Four Core Purposes in our school

by means of the 'Catholic Pupil Profile'. This is an approach taken by many Catholic schools to celebrating and encouraging these virtues, or character traits. Essentially, the virtues are the 'habits' or characteristics that are evident when the values are embedded in day-to-day practice. The virtues are generally represented in pairs, and pupils investigate each of the pairs in more detail throughout the year.

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.

- 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.

Inclusion

At Bishop Vaughan School, 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.

Equality

The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that Bishop Vaughan School 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.

Please access our website to view our policies on Equal Opportunities and Disability Equality: <https://www.bishopvaughan.co.uk/policies-and-documents>

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. 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 allow children to express alternative viewpoints where they hold such views.

At Bishop Vaughan School, RSE will be taught using a wide range of teaching strategies, delivered by a specialist team of staff from the Religious Studies department. Clear ground rules are discussed and established with every class, and the atmosphere is one of inclusion and respect for all.

Parents will have access to the RSE policy and can submit a request to the RSE Co-ordinator to see the teaching materials used with the learners in the classroom. We utilise both the Ten Ten and A Fertile Heart programmes of study, which have 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 when the lessons are being delivered to their children. All staff are experienced practitioners and will always take account of the safeguarding policy. Progress will be monitored through the use of baseline assessments. Additionally, the use of questioning in the classroom will play an important role in assessing the learners' knowledge and understanding of the topics covered. This information can be shared with parents during parent evening discussions.

Parents

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 n69). 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 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 exist (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 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 before it begins, and the RSE Co-ordinator welcomes discussions with parents to alleviate any concerns.

Information about RSE is contained in the school prospectus 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, the Parent Portal will contain information about the content of the RSE lessons to enable parents to continue the conversations at home, if they wish to.

Teaching RSE

The RSE Co-ordinator at Bishop Vaughan School is Mrs Adele Thomas, who is therefore responsible for the leadership, co-ordination 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, Deputy Headteacher and the Governing Body.

In order to fulfil the new legal requirements for RSE, Year 7-9 will be taught RSE through a timetabled lesson once a fortnight throughout the academic year.

Years 10-11 will be taught RSE through their RE lessons when there is a naturally occurring link with the GCSE specification, for example in conjunction with the Relationships module. Years 12 and 13 will receive RSE through their General RE sessions.

These arrangements will be reviewed on an annual basis.

The RSE programme is taught by a team of highly qualified teachers, who have all been trained to sensitively deliver the topics. The teachers are all members of the RE department and are therefore confident in communicating the teachings of the Catholic Church as an integral part of the programme.

Any external agencies that are invited to deliver any part of the RSE programme will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at Bishop Vaughan School and will agree in writing to follow the instructions. The appropriate '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 co-ordinator 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.. <https://www.bishopvaughan.co.uk/policies-and-documents>

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 child protection policy.

RSE is a mandatory requirement in the Curriculum for Wales for all learners from age 3 to 16. This means that all learners must receive this education. There is no right to withdraw from RSE within the Curriculum for Wales. This RSE policy has been written

to link with other school policies and processes at Bishop Vaughan School, including the Swansea Local Authority RSE policy.

Copies of this policy are available on our website, in policy folders on the school network and can be made available on request.

Date: October 2022

Date: November 2023

Date: November 2024

Date: November 2025

Next Policy Review Date: November 2026