

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

(Review Date: July 2014)

Policy Intentions

In Trinity Catholic High School, education is part of the Church's mission to proclaim that:

God the Father made us,
God the Son redeemed us,
God the Spirit keep us in His love.

Our aim is to grow as a community in the love of God who is revealed to us through his Word in the Bible and in the traditions of the Church. We believe that:

We are all unique, created in God's image and called to work for the common good.

This policy outlines the school's approach to relationships and sex education (RSE). It is underpinned by our Catholic ethos and reflects the Gospels and teaching of the Church, particularly the following two concepts:

The dignity and worth of each person made in the image and likeness of God.
The importance of individuals coming together in mutual support and regard, to live and work for the good of humankind and the glory of God.
Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church 1878ff

The Second Vatican Council in its 'Declaration on Christian Education' said:
Children and young people should be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual qualities... they should be given a positive and **prudent** education in matters relating to sex... children and young people have the right to be encouraged to make sound moral judgements with an informed conscience and to put them into practice by personal choice, and to know and love God better.

Declaration on Christian Education para. 1 Second Vatican Council ed. By. W. Abbott 1966

Our inclusion of the word prudent in this quotation is based upon its interpretation as practice informed by wisdom.

At Trinity, we are firmly committed to the belief that every child is created in the the image and likeness of God; that every young person has the right to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and to achieve economic well-being. Thus, we provide carefully planned provision across both Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 for the personal and social development of our students within an ethos that supports learning.

This policy is intended to support our curriculum provision, which includes PRE, science, R.E. and Citizenship, as well as guiding the whole school community in talking about, teaching and learning about relationships and sex at Trinity.

The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach to all education in a Catholic school.

“The inclusion of positive, person-centred education is at the heart of Catholic Christian education. This education is about the growth, development and journey of the whole human person towards becoming ‘fully human, fully alive’ as a unique creation made in God’s image.”
(‘Education in Sexuality’ CES)

The general purpose of RSE at Trinity is:

To support young people in developing a greater awareness of the Catholic faith and its distinctive understanding of the human person, of true relationships and of the nature of community.

To increase understanding and provide accurate information about sex related issues.

To dispel myths.

To explore a range of attitudes and values towards sex related issues and help young people to reach their own, informed opinions and, ultimately, develop healthier behaviours.

To develop a sense of care and mutual respect for others.

To increase young people’s self-esteem.

To develop personal, social and emotional skills relevant to all relationships and to sexual behaviour and situations. E.g. communication, risk assessment and management, managing relationships, decision making, assertiveness, conflict management, helping others, seeking help and accessing and using services.

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) is:

Lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage to family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health.’

(DfES Sex & Relationship Education, 0116/2000)

It is about the development of the pupil’s knowledge and understanding of her/himself as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience.

Moral and Values Framework

Our approach to sex and relationships education is presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals and values and as part of the Church’s teaching about what it is to be truly human in Christ. This places it firmly in the context of personal relationships. “It is crucial for the moral health of our society that we rediscover the true place of sex in human relationships” (Archbishop Murphy-O’Connor. The Tablet P1723 December 16th 2000)

The whole school community has taken part in a consultation process to identify the values that we believe underpin all teaching and learning about relationships and sex

at Trinity. This consultation process was driven by the RSE task group and included the selection of our underpinning values and the exploration of what these values might look like in practice. The values, together with what they mean to us, are presented below:

Knowledge/awareness & understanding -

As a school, we acknowledge that pupils come to us with an understanding of family life and relationships from their own experiences which may be both positive and negative. All teaching and learning will build upon pupils' experiences with the aim of developing a growing understanding and awareness according to pupils' age, needs and maturity.

Emotional involvement including talking about love and commitment in a marriage will be of key importance although we acknowledge that not all pupils will come from backgrounds where this is a norm.

In the past the school has made sure that young pregnant pupils are kept in school and not educated off site. This continues to be the case.

As a school we aim to live our Gospel values: Love God, Love your Neighbour, Love Yourself.

Discernment –

RSE should empower, enable, encourage and support young people to make sense of conflicting messages and resist peer pressure so they can make informed decisions about their personal relationships.

To develop a crucial awareness, SRE should address and challenge irresponsible messages from the media in discussions with children and young people.

Caring/kindness –

The school has a good pastoral team with Heads of Year, learning mentors, classroom assistants and two school chaplains/counsellors. Additionally, peer mentoring through the Guardian Angel scheme provides classroom support while Raphaelites provide a listening ear.

Behaviour for Learning helps to create a positive learning environment for all pupils where they feel safe and cared for.

Forgiveness –

This value is very important to us as a school. Fresh starts, successful managed moves into or from the school are dealt with effectively. As a school we believe in inclusion not exclusion.

Pupils are supported by an effective pastoral system.

When staff interact with pupils they respect honesty and will forgive. Students respond well to staff honesty and when adults in school make mistakes they are willing to apologise to pupils.

Individuality –

Individual children and young people are at the heart of the messages we provide through RSE by ensuring their health and well-being is promoted and maintained. Teaching and learning will be tailored to the needs of each pupil according to their age, maturity, learning style/ability, experiences and background.

Effective T&L helps pupils to develop self-awareness and an understanding of the way they respond in a range of situation which helps them to manage their behaviour and emotions.

Respect –

Pupils' thoughts and behaviours are affected by what they experience outside school, so it is up to the school to model positive relationships with pupils, parents and other staff.

Various pastoral initiatives throughout the school in all Key Stages help our most vulnerable pupils.

Pupils learn to respect themselves and build up their self esteem.

Pupils are taught to understand their sexual awareness and respect their own bodies. They have a right to wait for a loving relationship.

Staff model respect in every thing they do in school including in their interactions with parents.

It is important that pupils learn to know what is appropriate language and what is not appropriate and adults should model this to the pupils. We expect pupils to respect themselves and show understanding and respect towards each other including boys and girls using appropriate language towards each other.

Within the context of mutually respectful relationships, young people should understand that sexual intimacy involves strong emotions and should involve a sense of respect for one's own and other's feelings, decisions and actions.

Whilst maintaining Catholic values and ideals, accurate and relevant information should be provided honestly and sensitively in an age appropriate way. All pupils have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from and support needs to be provided to help pupils deal with different sets of values. Appropriate distinctions will also need to be made between the unique value and the sacredness of a person and the value judgements attached to particular behaviour or relationship patterns.

Confidentiality

All schools are required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to 'promote the well-being of pupils at the school'. We are committed to the well-being of our pupils and we therefore actively signpost confidential support services that can be accessed by our students.

In the class room, the aim is to strike a balance between helping pupils to feel respected, safe and able to participate fully and openly while still protecting privacy and safeguarding welfare.

Effective teaching and learning in PRE / RSE actively encourages pupils to share thoughts and voice opinions, so it is important to establish boundaries and clarify a the outset with pupils what will happen to any personal information they might disclose in the classroom.

Within school, the following protocol must be followed:

- Staff in school can never promise unconditional or absolute confidentiality

- Agreed ground rules in the classroom to support a safe learning environment
- Pupils will be encouraged to talk to their parents about the issues which are discussed through RSE.
- Ground rules need to make explicit to students that staff have a duty to protect young people from serious harm. In such circumstances, staff will need to talk to another professional about a disclosure. In the first instance, names should **not** be shared with that other professional in order to maintain confidentiality.
- Young people will always be informed of the intention/requirement to share this information and their consent will be sought.
- ‘Sharing information without consent is only recommended if it is in the child’s best interests to do so and there is a clear risk of significant harm to the young people or to others.’

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006)

All sexual activity involving under 13s must be reported to the Designated Member of Staff (DMS) for Child Protection who will fully document discussions, including detailed reasons where a decision is made not to share information.

There is no legal requirement to report sexual activity in 13-15 year olds. Although the age of consent remains at 16, the law (sexual Offences Act 2003) was never intended to criminalise sexual activity between consenting young people of this age.

At Trinity, all disclosure of sexual activity involving 13-15 year olds must be discussed with the DMS for Child Protection. In the first instance, in order to maintain confidentiality, names should not be shared with the DMS.

Sexual activity involving 16-17 year olds is unlikely to involve an offence.

Discussions with the DMS and subsequent action may be appropriate if staff suspect serious harm or the risk of serious harm. It is an offence for a person to have a sexual relationship with a 16 – or 17-year old they hold a position of trust or authority in relationship to them.

Sensitive issues

There will always be sensitive or controversial issues in the field of sex and relationship education. These may be to do with the pupils’ different levels of maturity, may be the personal involvement or the experience of children. It may have to do with a disagreement with or misunderstanding of the official teaching of the Church. It may relate to an illegal activity or other disclosures or harmful activity.

We believe that children are best educated and protected from harm and exploitation by ensuring that such issues are handled sensitively and appropriately within the context of the RSE provision. At Trinity we will seek to deal with all issues and wider questions sensitively, in a careful and balanced way, free from sensationalism and personal bias, at a level appropriate to the needs and experience of pupils. Account will be taken of different viewpoints. The use of ground rules, negotiated between teachers and pupils, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion. Pupils will be made aware of the Church’s teaching and the Law as they relate to the issues being discussed. Staff are encouraged to discuss the Church’s teaching, should they require clarification, with the Head of RE.

As a school community, we have identified those aspects which we deem to be sensitive.

Sensitive issues addressed within the taught programme
Physical and emotional changes during puberty
Managing changing relationships with family and friends
Physical and sexual relationships
Contraception
Assessing risks, sexual activity
Sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS
Parenting
Pornography
Paedophilia
Sexuality
Pregnancy and abortion
Loss and change e.g. divorce, bereavement (RE)
Marriage
Masturbation
IVF/Stem cell research

In order to de-sensitise some of these issues and to enable discussions to take place, staff make use of:

- Ground rules
- Our moral and values framework
- Distancing techniques e.g. create a character, story boarding
- Specialist support where appropriate e.g. school nurse, Theatre in Health Education
- Regular CPD opportunities for staff to attend and to discuss issues openly

Considerations:

Answering difficult questions:

In answering questions, all staff must respond within the agreed values framework as outlined above. Ground rules, negotiated and agreed with students at the outset, should ensure that a climate of trust is created with clear boundaries, thus ensuring that personal questions are not asked by students or by staff.

Bullying and homophobic bullying:

Bullying is taken seriously at Trinity and our active approach to dealing with the issues is detailed in our Anti-bullying policy. Evidence of homophobic bullying suggests that young people who are, or who are perceived to be gay or lesbian face a higher risk of victimisation than their peers. It is also the form of bullying that is least likely to be self-reported. We have a legal duty to ensure that homophobic bullying is dealt with (Education and Inspections Act 2006).

At Trinity we:

- Ensure that the homophobic language by adults or young people will not be tolerated in school.
- Invoke anti-bullying procedures appropriately
- Are proactive in promoting equalities and diversity

Roles and responsibilities

Parents

We recognise that parents are the first educators of their children with regard to relationships and sex. The school will seek to support parents in this role. Both the Church and the State recognise the central and primary role of parents in assisting their children's physical, spiritual and psychological growth in preparation for the challenges and responsibilities of adult sexual life.

Pupils

Pupils have an entitlement to quality RSE appropriate to age and circumstance. They will be actively consulted about their RSE needs and their views will be central to developing provision. Pupils have a responsibility to work within agreed ground rules and values. It is hoped that pupils will have the confidence and self-esteem that will enable them to enjoy relationships based on mutual respect, dignity and responsibility.

Staff

All the adult members of the school community are themselves role models and educators in this dimension of pupils' education. All teachers and non-teaching staff involved in the school's RSE provision have a responsibility to deliver quality RSE within the planned provision and which meets the daily needs of the children. Teacher will be consulted about the school's approach to RSE and aided in their work by provision of resources, background information, support and advice and access to appropriate training. Teachers also have a duty to bring to the head teacher's attention any child protection issues (see Child Protection Policy for specific guidance).

Governors

Have responsibility for ensuring that, in consultation with the parents and teachers, there is a relationships and sex education policy, which is in keeping with Catholic Teaching. They will ensure that the policy is available to parents and that parents know of their right to withdraw their children. Governors will ensure that the programme and the resources are suitably monitored and evaluated.

PRE subject leader

The subject leader will maintain an overview of RSE provision and have overall responsibility for its development. This will include keeping up to date with developments and good practice, developing the provision to meet pupils' needs, providing support and resources for staff, arranging staff training, liaison with outside agencies and monitoring and evaluation.

Use of outside agencies:

At Trinity recognise that it is good practice to include outside agencies in the delivery of RSE where appropriate. The school nurse, in particular, has a key role in

supporting the RSE programme in partnership with school staff. Any supporting agencies deemed appropriate by the PRE Co-ordinator must:

- Work within the school's RSE policy at all times, including our values framework and confidentiality protocols.
- Work in partnership with school staff, using a partnership agreement
- Bring some additional knowledge and understanding to the learning experience for our students e.g. specialist health knowledge

Parental right to withdraw:

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from aspects of RSE that go beyond statutory National Curriculum orders for science. Parental views and rights will always be respected. Any parents who wish to discuss the possibility of withdrawal from RSE are asked, in the first instance, to contact the Head Teacher. The PRE Co-ordinator is happy to discuss aspects of our RSE provision with parents. Where pupils are withdrawn from planned RSE, they will be accommodated in alternative lessons. They will **not** be withdrawn where issues around relationships and sex education arise spontaneously through the curriculum and other aspects of school life.

Link to policy and guidance:

This policy has been drawn up with reference to:
Archdiocese of Westminster Guidance on Sex and Relationships Education (2004)
DfEE Sex and Relationship Education Guidance (0116/2000)
Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006)
Trinity Catholic High School's Child Protection Policy
Trinity Catholic High School's Anti-bullying Policy

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Teaching and learning in RSE will be monitored through lesson observations and pupil interviews carried out by the co-ordinator on an annual basis. Feedback will be given to staff individually and the information collected used to identify specific and more general professional development needs.

Regular evaluation of the RSE programme by the pupils, their parents/carers and the staff involved will inform future practice by identifying training needs, ensure that the programme remains relevant to the needs of the children and help maintain a commitment to quality RSE.

Resources

A range of teaching resources is used to assist in the teaching of RSE. No one scheme has been adopted rather staff select resources according to the needs of their children with regard to the following points:

- The school's values and moral framework;
- Appropriateness in terms of languages, images, attitude, maturity and understanding;
- Factual accuracy;
- The range of children and families it reflects;
- The needs of boys and girls;
- Purpose – skills development, development of attitudes, discussion of values, providing information;

- Encouraging active and participatory methods.
- All resources used in the teaching of RSE should be approved by the Head of RE.