

## **SMCS POLICY ON: EDUCATION FOR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Introduction**

In this policy the Governors and teachers, in partnership with pupils and their parents, set out their intentions with regard to sex and relationship education. We set out our rationale for and approach to sex and relationship education in the school. It is characterised by a whole person, whole school, and developmental approach thus setting it firmly within our distinctively Christian vision of education. This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies.

### **The Mission and Aims of the School**

*"A Catholic community dedicated to achieving excellence for all"*

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child: spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural and emotional and we believe that sex and relationship education is an integral part of this education. Furthermore our School Aims state that we will endeavour to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we commit ourselves to "positive and prudent" sex and relationship education" ('Declaration on Christian Education', Vatican II).

### **Defining Sex and Relationship Education**

SRE is learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the development of the pupils' knowledge and understanding of themselves as sexual beings, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others. It means developing pupils' abilities to make conscientious decisions about sexuality and behaviour. Good SRE enables pupils to recognise and understand the importance of marriage and family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It has three main elements: "attitudes and values, personal and social skills, and knowledge and understanding" (Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, DfEE).

### **Rationale**

We recognise our pupils as unique persons, created in the image of God, loved by God and intended to have life to the full. We willingly share, with parents, the responsibility to provide "positive and prudent" sex and relationship education for our pupils. We accept this responsibility in order to ensure that the information pupils receive is accurate. Our intention is to take control of the provision of this aspect of education. We share the Bishops' desire to provide a "whole person ... whole school ... developmental approach" to this curriculum ('Laying The Foundations', Bishops of England and Wales Low Week statement, 1987), to allow the Gospel message to be heard. Our aim is to keep our pupils safe. Above all we will provide this sex and relationship education out of conviction not as a response to some crisis.

### **Objectives**

- To promote the appreciation and development of attitudes and values which are truly gospel inspired, e.g., love, truth, justice, freedom, integrity and reconciliation; As Catholic educators we will aim to engage the hearts and minds of our young people following the example of Jesus to listen to our young people before responding to them.
- To provide, appropriate to age and ability, full and accurate knowledge and understanding about sexuality and relationships; This will be developmental by design and "planned and coordinated in such a way that is not fragmentary nor perceived by the pupils as such"

- To enable pupils to develop personal and social skills: to be confident in right relationships, to keep them safe from harm and to protect them from exploitation and by being aware of the world in which they live and are growing up.

### **Aims**

The school will aim to

- Augment students' knowledge and understanding of human sexuality, the details of puberty and human procreation in their physical, emotional, moral, spiritual, and social development so that their needs and concerns can be identified and addressed.
- Facilitate in the students the development of self-love and self-worth as creatures made in the image and likeness of God.
- Enable students to have a sense of self responsibility.
- Enable students to discern and make choices in the light of the teaching of the Church.
- Enable students to have particular regard to their personal safety and welfare particularly in matters of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.
- Enable students to reflect on their relationships and recognise qualities that help relationships to grow and develop positively.
- Enable students to consider critically the values of the modern world in general and their teenage subculture in particular with regard to human sexuality.
- Enable students to develop an understanding of love as central to human relationships and the way in which this is expressed in marriage and in other states of life such as the single life, religious life and priesthood.
- Enable students to appreciate the meaning of the sacrament of marriage as a covenant of love and a sign of the relationship between God and humankind.
- Enable students to appreciate the joys, and difficulties in marriage such as adultery, divorce and childlessness.
- Enable students to develop a deep appreciation of the importance of values of family life and the varied forms the family can take in the modern world.
- Enable students to be aware of the issues raised by homosexuality and understand the teaching of the Church in relation to homosexuality. To be aware of the changing laws of the land in regard to homosexuality.
- To give knowledge of all sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.
- To augment teachers self-confidence and subject knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and their physical, emotional, moral, spiritual, and social development of young people so that they enable students to identify and address their needs and concerns.

### **Responsibilities;**

#### **Governors**

The Governing Body is responsible for producing and maintaining a written policy on Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), which will then be made available to parents through our website. Governors are also responsible for the content of Sex & Relationship Education courses and the school's overall teaching approach, as well as satisfying themselves that the teaching materials used are appropriate and of a high quality.

## **Teachers**

The Head teacher is overall responsible for the sex and relationship education programme. The Head of Religious Education and Ethos carries delegated responsibility along with the Assistant Head teacher responsible for Ethos, the Assistant Head teacher with responsibility for Child Protection and the PHSE Coordinator, the Head of Science and those delivering some aspects of Health and Social Care, and Childcare.

Classroom teachers are responsible for the delivery of the material. Appendix A gives an outline of the existing provision at St Mary's Catholic School. Teachers are encouraged to ask for help and guidance if needed and the school is committed to encouraging staff to keep up to date with training and delivery of materials outlined. Teachers are responsible for the review, monitoring and evaluation of the sex and relationship education. They also manage the procedures for informing parents of the content of the courses being taught and for dealing with parental requests for withdrawal. All staff carry some responsibility for the sex and relationship education programme.

## **Parents**

St Mary's recognise the importance of parents as the primary educators of their children as do both the State and the Church. They have the first responsibility in educating their children in physical, spiritual and psychological growth in preparation for the challenges and responsibilities that will face them in adult life including those of a sexual nature.

Parents are contacted every academic year and informed of the topics being covered in each term. They are invited to contact the school if they have any issues or need further information about the materials being used. Parents will be involved in the review and evaluation of the materials being used in the sex and relationship education curriculum.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from sex and relationship education should they wish to do so they should contact the headteacher.

## **Sensitive Issues**

### *Homosexuality*

Any discussion regarding homosexuality is done from the position of respect, compassion and is non-judgemental of the individual. Any student discovering their sexuality needs to be supported and encouraged to seek the truth about themselves and the views of others as they make that journey.

### *Contraception*

Any discussion regarding contraception is conducted within the context of Catholic teaching. Students will discuss methods of "Responsible parenthood" and Natural Law will underpin the teaching of family planning. Artificial methods of contraception will be discussed and students will be positively encouraged to delay sexual activity.

### *Abortion*

Any discussion of abortion will involve the views of the Catholic Church, and both medical and ethical considerations will be considered.

### *Sexually transmitted diseases & HIV/AIDS*

Informative discussions covering the transmission of the HIV virus will, by the very nature of the subject will cover sexual acts and practices, helping students clarify their knowledge about HIV/AIDS and STI's, teaching them assertiveness skills for negotiating relationships. Teachers will deal sensitively and objectively with information of this kind, at the same time trying to avoid bias and prejudice. Staff are also aware that they may be dealing with students who are HIV positive, or who may have close links with others who are. It may be the case that the teaching of apparently unrelated topics will occasionally lead to a discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour. When such discussion is relatively limited and placed within the context of the subject concerned, it will not

necessarily contribute to a part of a programme of sex and relationship education. Teachers will endeavour to answer students' questions honestly and sensitively and in such a way that takes the context of Catholic teaching into account.

### **Confidentiality**

Teachers are aware that effective sex & relationship education, which brings an understanding of what is and is not acceptable in a relationship, can lead to disclosure of a child protection issue. Any worries or fears students bring into the classroom should not go unnoticed by teachers. If a member of staff suspects that a child is a victim of abuse or they have a reason to believe that the student is at risk of abuse, they should report their concerns following procedures set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### **Organisation of the programme**

There are three aspects of the sex and relationship education policy,

- Attitudes and values
- Knowledge and understanding
- Personal and Social skills

These are provided in inter related ways across the whole school, ethos dimension, the cross curricular dimension and a specific sex and relationship curriculum.

Appendix A outlines the places these different aspects are delivered.

Review date: June 2014

Date of next review: June 2017

Responsible committee: Pastoral