

Mary Immaculate High School Cluster



Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Mission Statement

Achieve the best for all...

Vision Statement

At Mary Immaculate High School, we work as a family with pupils, staff, parents, and the wider community. Each individual is valued and nurtured within a safe, stimulating, happy and caring environment where fairness and equal opportunities prevail. Everyone is given opportunities to achieve excellence whilst remaining sensitive to the needs of others.

Race Equality Statement

At Mary Immaculate High School, we are committed to race equality, promoting positive approaches to difference and fostering respect for people of all cultural backgrounds. We are opposed to all forms of racial prejudice and discrimination. Language or behaviour that is racist or potentially damaging to any ethnic or racial group will not be tolerated and will be challenged. We recognise that Wales and the rest of the U.K. have diverse societies made of people from many different races, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. It is important that all children are prepared to live in such a diverse society.

Basic Skills and Equal Opportunities

Mary Immaculate High School is committed to valuing all members of the school community. We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of all staff to improve the basic skills of pupils. We are fully aware that different forms of discrimination exist in our society and we believe that we have a crucial role to play combating this. We aim to promote fairness, justice and equality and to this end we endeavour to have high expectations of our pupils, staff and parents.

“The Catholic School Vision has as its focal point the human person, the clearest reflection of God among us. Scripture tells us that every human being is made in the image of God ... Christ challenges us to see his presence in our neighbours, especially the neighbour who suffers or who lacks what is essential to human flourishing.

In relieving our neighbour’s suffering and meeting their needs, we are also serving Christ. For the Christian, therefore, there can be no higher privilege and duty.”

The Common Good in Education (A statement on the Catholic Church’s social teaching 1996 – Bishop’s Conference of England and Wales.)

Vision for Relationship and Sex Education

In the Mary Immaculate Cluster, we are inspired by Jesus to be the very best we can be. We look after one another and show respect and love through our relationships with one another. Jesus is invited into our lives daily. In the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to lead a full life with him by explaining what makes people blessed or happy. This is about understanding how loving our neighbour enables us to be fulfilled too. Therefore, having a good relationship with ourselves and the other people in our lives makes 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, called to grow in love for him through the person of Jesus Christ and to spread the Good News through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Procedures

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

- staff
- governing body
- parents
- Diocesan Education Service
- wider community (show policy to the Parish)

In consultation with the Governing Body, the policy will be implemented in September 2019, reviewed every two years, by the Head teacher, RSE Co-ordinator and the Governing Body. School staff to give feedback on early implementation of the policy. The next review date is November 2023.

Our Information for Parents Booklet contains a statement about Relationships and Sex Education teaching and details of where to obtain a full copy of the policy upon request

Rationale

As a Catholic secondary school in the Province of Cardiff, we use the term Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) as we believe that sex education is set in a wider context of relationship education that is about all aspects of growing a fulfilled and happy life. Sex education 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 – our bodies are the dwelling place, the ‘temple’ of 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 part of complete human formation. Education about human love is no less a part of a Catholic school’s responsibility than teaching about Mathematics or English. Within the cluster, we teach young people about how to grow in relationships, including understanding loving relationships and acknowledging that children’s first experience of love is in the home. We encourage children from the earliest age to recognise that they are all children of God and that each person shares a God-given dignity. As children 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). This is the basis for all relationships in our school. Teaching about relationships in our schools is supported by Christian virtue teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in line with the agreed cluster statement.

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. We support 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 the relevant CBEW and CES RSE Guidance.

Statutory framework

The statutory framework that surrounds education about human relationships can be found on the CES website. The Governing Body of all Cluster schools are using the RSE Archdiocese of Cardiff Scheme which is in line with Catholic teaching and guidance from the Welsh government guidance documentation. The schools is happy to inform parents of what and how this is to be taught and provides opportunities for parents to discuss concerns they may have. All our Cluster schools provide sex education as contained within the national curriculum in Wales.

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 simply '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).

Within our Cluster, we live out the Gospel values shared in the Beatitudes, throughout the life of our schools by implementing the agreed cluster mission and through the Pupil Profile.

- Grateful and Generous
- Attentive and Discerning
- Compassionate and Loving
- Faith- Filled and Hopeful
- Eloquent and Truthful
- Learned and Wise
- Curious and Active
- Intentional and Prophetic

As pupils progress through Key Stages 3 and 4 they will develop a deeper understanding of what is moral behaviour and be able to say why this is important for personal happiness and for a closer relationship with God. In addition to the points made above, are they given opportunities to learn how prayer enables them to make space for God in their lives and offers opportunities for reflection and growth. This is done through pupil planned reflection, worship, Christian mediation, assemblies and liturgies. By the end of Year 11, **children should be able to explain some behaviour choices by reference to their beliefs and values (eg. by referring to Christ's teaching on forgiveness.)**

The Aim and Objectives of RSE

The aim of RSE is part of our aim to educate the complete human person. This is expressed in Fit for Mission? Schools (2009) as follows:-

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.

Though the ethos and daily practice of school, 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.
- develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity in all.
- enable children to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.
- encourage children to learn about expressing their own emotions and being respectful of the emotions and behaviours of others.
- 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.
- encourage everyone in the school to recognise their part in the school family and work together for reconciliation when relationships in the school falter.
- encourage everyone in the school to value humility, mercy and compassion and to respond with empathy to the problems of others.
- develop children's knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for their own safety.
- develop children's experience of what it is to be happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and gratification and value patience.
- teach children about the media and their choices, about what to watch, what games to play, what rules apply and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.
- support children 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.

- foster an atmosphere in school which celebrates the work of the Trinity through the life of the school and its relationship with the Church.
- teach children about the beauty of the Church's teaching about love and God's love for them which is shared in the Sacraments.
- sensitively share the Church's teaching about the importance of marriage and family life as a way to live in loving relationships with others and with God.

Inclusion

As a Cluster of schools, 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 and background. Lessons are framed by this understanding and young people encouraged to respect each other in their differences, and develop an approach of dialogue. (See Additional Learning Needs policy.)

Equality

The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that all at Mary Immaculate High School endeavour to do their 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. (See Equalities policy.)

Programme of study

The Province recommends appropriate resources to its family of schools in Section 2.1 above. 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, in cross-curricular 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. 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.

RSE will be taught through a wide range of teaching strategies with clear ground rules for discussions established. Parents are involved throughout and informed when lessons are taking place and given the opportunity to view material used with the pupils. Schools will monitor progress in understanding, linking with Religious Education and Science policies. Children's well-being will be monitored through well-being policies and procedures (eg. Behaviour, Anti-bullying, etc..)

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 this policy before it was ratified by the governing body.

Teaching RSE

There is a named RSE Subject Leader (Head of Faculty) and an RSE Governor who monitors the programme. 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 must conduct their behaviour in school in accordance with the vision and mission of the school.

Teaching and learning about human relationships will be part of the life of the school. However, the programme of study will be taught through cross-curricular dimensions where appropriate, such as R.E., Science, PSE, Health and Wellbeing and Information and Communication Technology.

Sometimes, the children's learning will be best supported by using other agencies, such as the school nurse, Police school liaison officer or other visitors to school. Such visitors will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at Mary Immaculate and will agree in writing to follow the instructions. The appropriate 'protocol' available on the CES website will be used for this purpose.

Supporting children and young people deemed to be at risk

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. This should always be done within the safeguarding framework of the school and it is paramount that all staff teaching RSE have up-to-date safeguarding professional development.

Questions asked by pupils 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.

The following guidance for dealing with questions in teaching RSE will be followed:-

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.

- 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. There are many staff in school – especially senior or RE staff - who can also advise.
- 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)

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