

Sex and Relationship Education: Policy Documents and Guiding Principles for Lancaster Diocese Primary Schools

The Diocese of Lancaster Education Service proposes the following *Guiding Principles* for schools in the Diocese for Sex and Relationships Education. These principles are the essential context for a Catholic school's SRE policy. A policy, designed as a model for primary schools to adopt, follows below. The guiding principles and the policy are complementary and should not be read in isolation.

Guiding Principles

Vision

1. Dignity of the person

We are created in God's image. Human nature is further uplifted because the Son of God became one of us. Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary. We have an innate dignity which demands that we seek goodness and commands the respect of others and towards others.

2. Human Sexuality

Human sexuality is a holy mystery. It is part of the identity of each person as man or as woman. Human sexuality is an expression of the physical and spiritual difference between a man and a woman, and that they are complementary. This is part of God's plan for human love and marriage. Our sexual nature is good. It is in marriage that our sexuality finds the environment for its fullest expression.

3. Marriage

Marriage is rooted in the covenant which a man and a woman make when they give themselves in love to each other for the whole of their lives. This is a lasting relationship which is described by the Church as a 'marriage covenant of conjugal love'. In this covenant of love the two people give mutual help and service to each other through an intimate union of their persons and actions. Loving self-giving expressed through sexual intimacy is designed to allow married couples to share by procreation in the creative work of God.

4. Human brokenness

Through sin human nature is damaged. Good habits can be broken, our desires can become selfish and love can be corrupted. This leads to suffering and can harm our relationships with God and with others. But God is our father and loves us despite our failings. God our Father calls us to repent and sent His Son to heal our brokenness.

5. Restored by Jesus

In Jesus Christ, God restores all things. He saves us from sin and teaches us the way to live full lives. He fashioned a new covenant between God and mankind, and gave the Church authority to teach in his name. Christ restated the vision of marriage as a life-long exclusive union of man and woman. (Mark10,2-12).

6. Called to holiness

We are all called by God our Father to come into His presence and share in His life and joy. Sometimes we find it difficult to follow God's ways but He always encourages us, forgives us and helps us on our way. We too must not condemn others but encourage them and help them to respond to God's call. This will sometimes mean saying sorry for when we have done wrong.

Catholic Ethos

7. The ethos of a Catholic School requires that:

- a) As a community we seek to put God first in all things.
- b) The leadership and management of the school will ensure that the school seeks to remain faithful to authoritative Catholic teaching of Christian doctrine in all things.
- c) The governors of a Catholic school of the Lancaster Diocese ensure that the school acts in fulfilment of the Trust Deed of the Diocese of Lancaster.
- d) Loving relationships between people and God, and among mankind, are promoted in the school. Thus we promote peace, justice and the coming of God's kingdom. These loving relationships are in harmony with natural and divine law and flow from practice of the virtues. (The virtues: faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance; the fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, chastity.)
- e) The sacramental nature of Christian marriage is recognised and taught in the school.
- f) The Church's teaching about the dignity and purpose of marriage is recognised and taught in the school. Marriage is the proper context for sexual union and raising children. The purpose of sex within marriage is to express the mutual love and affection of the couple and for procreation.
- g) Virtuous living is promoted in the school. Chastity is recognised and promoted as an aspect of this virtuous living, in which self-awareness and self-control contribute to the growth into full human maturity. Chastity involves continence for those who are single, whether unmarried, separated, divorced, widowed or committed to celibacy, and faithful monogamy for the married.
- h) The primacy of the role of parents in the education of their own children is recognised, and that the role of the school is subsidiary to that of the parents:
"Since they have conferred life on their children, parents have the original, primary and inalienable right to educate them; ... Parents have the right to educate their children in conformity with their moral and religious convictions, ... ; they should also receive from society the necessary aid and assistance to perform their educational role properly," and:
"In particular, sex education is a basic right of the parents and must always be carried out under their close supervision, whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them."
(*Charter of the Rights of the Family*, 1983, Articles 5, 5a, 5c. Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 793, 1136).

- i) The governors and senior leadership of the school recognise that some aspects of sexuality are best treated individually and ideally as part of an ongoing parental relationship of friendship and trust.
- j) The leadership of the school emphasise that pastoral sensitivity is required for the cultural and family context in which a child lives. This sensitivity will include an appreciation of when the truth of the Gospel must prevail over culture. There may be a need to stand against the prevailing secular and permissive culture, and to protect children from lessons in human sexuality which are explicit, premature or misleading.
- k) The leadership and management of the school seek consistent application of these principles across the whole curriculum and from all staff.

8. Accordingly, the ethos of a Catholic school promotes:

- a) An approach to human life which seeks to offer support and assistance, and does not regard the birth of a child as a threat.
- b) All that is worthy in relationships such as respect, honesty, generosity, kindness, gentleness etc and rejects abuse, exploitation etc.
- c) A moral system which affirms the objective reality of good and evil, and rejects such systems which emphasise absolute personal autonomy, individual conscience, relativism, or the pursuit of pleasure.
- d) The positive presentation and encouragement to live the virtues of modesty (which means respecting the dignity of oneself and others, especially with regard to our sexuality) and chastity (which means that our sexuality is guided by personal choices which are life-long, responsible, mature and recognise that sexual intimacy is for the purpose of love and new life).
- e) Respect of the child's sense of delicacy and privacy concerning sexual matters.
- f) Marriage as the place for the sexual expression of loving intimacy open to life, and rejects the condoning of extramarital sexual acts, a recreational approach to sex and treating alternative relationships as identical to marriage.
- g) The sanctity of human life, and rejects the condoning of abortion which ends innocent human life.
- h) An approach to human sexuality which confers on the sexual expression of loving intimacy its proper dignity and understanding as a profound sign of the covenant of love between a man and a woman. This positive approach excludes anything which risks reducing the understanding of sex to the level of a mere bodily function or biological process.

External agencies which oppose the school's ethos will not be used, as this would be a betrayal of the school's duty to parents and their children, and the Church. The governors and leadership of the school ensure that all programmes and presentations are in accordance with the aims and objectives of Catholic Church teaching as outlined above.

St Columba's Catholic Primary School

Sex and Relationship Education Policy

God is love and in Himself He lives a mystery of personal loving communion as Father and Son and Holy Spirit. God created the human race in his own image. He inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation of love and communion.

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and bring children into the world, and, in a more general way, the ability to form bonds of communion with others.

This policy aspires to express the practical consequences of what the Church teaches about humanity made in God's image, and about sexuality as God's gift.

1. Introduction

- a) This policy responds to the requirements of the Education Act 1993, 241(5) for schools to formulate and keep updated a policy on Sex and Relationships Education.
- b) This policy statement is to be read in the context of whole document including the *Guiding Principles*. Schedules (A) to (D) form part of the policy. It is underpinned by the School Mission Statement.
- c) SRE is defined as all the activities in school involving children which helps to form the way they interact with others, and their appreciation of human sexuality as described above (*Sexuality – a mystery of the person*).
- d) The *This is my body* programme is the SRE programme specified by the Diocese of Lancaster for use in Primary Schools.
- e) Delivery of the course is the responsibility of those designated by the headteacher and trained accordingly.
- f) The monitoring and evaluation of the course reflects the aims and principles inherent in it: hence an important concern is the satisfaction of parents with both its appropriateness and its impact on their children.

2. Rationale and context for SRE

- a) Education in relationships, and especially in sexual relations, is the right and duty of the parents of each individual child. The school provision of SRE is therefore offered as a service to assist parents, and is not intended to replace the role of parents in this area. The Church teaches very clearly that the school's role is subsidiary to the parents' role in this matter. This means that the parents are the first educators of their children and that the parents enter into partnership with others whom they trust (in this case the Catholic school) to assist and enable them to carry out their responsibilities.

- b) Such assistance in the field of sex and relationships education will be clearly set in the framework of Catholic Church teaching.
- c) As a caring Catholic school, our role is to promote the development of the whole person including aspects of character such as self-esteem and responsibility. The ability to form strong, healthy, stable relationships is fostered in many different areas of the curriculum.
- d) The school seeks to help children to reflect on the different roles and demands of family relationships. It is in the family that children first experience affection, respect, arguments, saying sorry, forgiveness and other ways of relating to others.
- e) Sex and relationships education as provided in this school will seek to build on the child's own experience, sensitive to the varied home background of individual pupils.

3. Aims of the SRE programme

The programme aims:

- a) to support parents in their role as first educators in relationships and sexuality;
- b) to build upon the understanding and interest children have in themselves, their bodies and relationships learnt in the home from birth;
- c) to develop the child's sense of being a unique creation of God, and hence his/her self-worth;
- d) to appreciate the preciousness of God's gift of life;
- e) to instil a sense of awe and wonder at the child in the womb from conception to birth and the uniqueness of every human being;
- f) to encourage children to have a positive approach to themselves, their feelings and their sexual nature;
- g) to teach the value of chastity and a sense of responsibility in their relationships;
- h) to enable children to realise the importance of commitment, self-denial, perseverance and other virtues in family relationships;
- i) to promote appreciation of the values of family life;
- j) to enable the children to recognise and appreciate the importance of marriage;
- k) to enable and encourage the children to make good choices about relationships;
- l) to empower and enable children to articulate Catholic values in the challenges of the modern world;
- m) to understand the reasons for the changes that occur at puberty.

4. Virtuous living will be promoted by:

- a) **Chastity:** Sex and relationships education in the school will uphold a positive approach to chastity. Young people can and do exercise self-control and they deserve encouragement and support to do so. Chastity protects the person, especially the young person, physically and emotionally, and allows love and mutual respect to grow in relationships.
- b) **Modesty:** Modesty is about protecting something which is precious: our sexuality, which is something not to be flaunted or cheapened on the one hand nor denied or rejected on the other. Modesty is about looking at others without undermining their dignity. It is about respect for others and oneself and decency in the best sense of these words. Any presentation of inappropriate

material that contradicts this principle, even for the purpose of demonstration or criticism, is excluded.

- c) **Sensitivity:** Sensitivity must be shown to aspects of sexuality best treated individually, and ideally by parents. If a child raises matters too sensitive to be addressed in a class setting teachers and schools will seek to assist parents in addressing these issues individually.
- d) **Age appropriate teaching:** All information presented will be appropriate to the pupils' developmental stage. Indirect sex education will occur during the latency period (from around 5 years to the onset of puberty).

Since the vision of the Catholic Church is based on the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Gospels which promote life, love and family, we will not condone:

Anti-Christian and anti-life approaches: secularism or a "values-free" approach to teaching about human sexuality will not be used. Abortion will not be promoted, provided, facilitated or condoned. Information or services for obtaining such a measure will not be provided, promoted, permitted or condoned.

Extra-marital sexual activity and promiscuity: artificial contraception and post-coital birth control will not be promoted, provided, facilitated or condoned. Information about services for obtaining and using such measures will not be provided, promoted, permitted or condoned.

Cultural practices contrary to Catholic teaching: While we recognise and celebrate different cultural traditions and practices, where these are contrary to the ethos of the Catholic school or are raised for any reason, we will teach, without condemning individuals, that these are wrong.

5. Resources, Visitors, etc.

- a) This policy also applies to all teaching and learning resources, such as DVDs, websites, written material, graphics etc.
- b) This policy applies equally to any visiting speaker or specialist advisor, off-site activity or visit arranged by the school. The acceptance of this policy will be secured in advance from the individual(s) involved, and any presentation/ material will be monitored to ensure that it complies.

Schedules

Schedule (A): Particular roles and responsibilities

1) Parents

"Sex education, which is a basic right and duty of parents, must always be carried out under their attentive guidance, whether at home or in educational centres chosen and controlled by them. In this regard, the Church reaffirms the law of subsidiarity, which the school is bound to observe when it cooperates in sex education, by entering into the same spirit that animates the parents" (*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, Pontifical Council for the Family, 1995, citing Pope John-Paul II).

We recognise parents as the first educators of their children. This is their right and duty, and flows from their natural relationship to one another and to their children. We recognise that parents sometimes express difficulty in discussing sex and relationships with their children. The school seeks to support, and not replace them in this situation. Advice and support will be offered to parents to deal with sensitive issues they need to address.

- a) The school will provide in advance full information to parents and opportunities for consultation and involvement in the SRE programme (see role of headteacher, below).
- b) Parents are entitled to withdraw their child from any or all sessions of the programme for any reason. Alternative supervision will be made in school. Parents must inform the school in writing in advance if they intend to withdraw their child.

2) Diocese

Guided and inspired by the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, we hold that the human person is a spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical unity. All education must be of the whole person. This Catholic school is part of a family of schools and parishes, and is established in order that the education of the children in this school can be taught as an integral part of the Catholic Faith.

It is part of the duty of the Bishop of the Diocese of Lancaster under the Law of the Church (CIC 796-806) to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools in his area and to ensure that the formation and education provided in such schools are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine.

It is also the duty of the Bishop and Trustees of the Diocese under Charity Law to ensure that the schools of the Diocese act in accord with the Trust Deed of the Diocese.

The Trust Deed of the Diocese of Lancaster states that, with respect to schools of the Lancaster Diocese, the Trust applies to:

- a) The provision, maintenance and upkeep of schools and colleges for the general education both religious and secular or religious or secular of children and young persons members of the said Church;
- b) The religious doctrines and practices to be taught and observed in any such school shall in all respects be according to the principles and subject to the regulations and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church.

3) Governors

The Foundation Governors of Catholic schools are appointed by the Bishop in order to promote and safeguard the Catholic character of the school.

- a) The governors of this Catholic school of the Lancaster Diocese acknowledge and intend to promote the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church in the fulfilment of their ecclesial and statutory duties, for the benefit of the children in their care.
- b) They recognise that the parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, and that parents have special rights and duties over sex and relationships education.

- c) The governors intend to comply with statutory requirements.

4) Headteachers & delegated responsibility

- a) The headteacher has overall responsibility for implementing the SRE programme and its integration into the school's curriculum and ethos.
- b) Headteachers have particular duty to respect and support the primary role of parents in this field.
- c) The headteacher may appoint a Coordinator for Education in Human Sexuality (CEHS) – a suitable person appropriately trained. The headteacher or delegated senior person will ensure that any discussion or treatment of sexuality in the school curriculum is consistent with Catholic teaching. They will assist colleagues to acquire and present up-to-date knowledge of the vision and teaching of the Catholic Church in this field.
- d) The headteacher or delegated senior person will provide parents with full information about the proposed SRE programme before it is initiated, and will obtain parental consent in respect of each child before the child is allowed to participate in the programme. Opportunities for consultation and involvement will also be offered.

5) Staff

- a) Teachers and all those contributing to SRE are expected to work within the values framework as described in this policy document, in line with the school's ethos.
- b) Appropriate development and training facilitated by the Diocese will be undertaken. It will accord fully with the approach of *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (Pontifical Council for the Family, 1995) and take into account current statutory requirements.

6) Outside speakers; off-site elements

- a) Any SRE provision will be based in-school or in a diocesan approved centre to maintain the closest link with parents. The Bishop's prior approval secured through the Diocesan Education Service will be obtained for alternative off site provision.
- b) It is the intention that, in those circumstances where any person from outside the school is to talk to an individual pupil or group of pupils about sex and relationships education, that this is done only with the explicit consent of the parents.

Schedule (B) What should be taught in SRE at Primary level

The content and delivery of SRE should be in line with the Catholic ethos of the school and the Church's teaching on human sexuality.

The *This is My Body* programme is used in the school to fulfil this obligation alongside the wider curriculum.

Children are taught:

- a) to understand their own dignity, created by God, and to have a sense of self-worth and self-respect flowing from this;
- b) that in God's plan every child is the result of the loving vocation of parents;
- c) that love is the foundation and core of meaningful relationships;
- d) the meaning and value of family life;

- e) the importance of marriage;
- f) about the tasks and the responsibilities of parents;
- g) about the rituals that mark birth, marriage and death;
- h) awareness of emotions and how to control and respond to them;
- i) to become aware that there are good choices and wrong choice;
- j) to take responsibility for their actions and choices;
- k) the importance of forgiveness and of saying sorry;
- l) to recognise peer, social and media pressure and how to assess pressures and respond appropriately;
- m) a whole-person approach to human sexuality – set in the context of loving and life-giving in marriage, avoiding reduction to mere bodily functions;
- n) animal reproduction and human procreation – biological aspects, and the spiritual and relational differences;
- o) an understanding of their bodies and the changes which they will undergo, including (by the final primary year) the onset of puberty;
- p) that some diseases are infectious;
- q) the need for personal health and safety and personal hygiene.

Schedule (C) Delivery of SRE at Primary level

- a) Any SRE provision will be delivered to the highest attainable teaching standards, including excellence of resources and methodology.
- b) There will be proper regard to subsidiarity – and the roles and duties of various parties, as described in Schedule (A).
- c) Parental consent for SRE will be obtained and sensitive provision made for any child not participating in all or any sessions for any reason.
- d) Since SRE includes aspects of factual, spiritual, physical, moral & intellectual development, those delivering it will have regard to the teaching objectives of all areas of the curriculum. SRE will span different learning areas and subjects but will not be fragmented. The biology of reproduction, for example, and matters of reproductive health can only be fully understood and will only be taught reflecting on human love, its relationship to chastity and its fulfilment in marriage.
- e) Delivery of SRE will seek to develop the children’s sense of personal safety, the difference between good and bad touching, trusted adults and legitimate confidentiality.
- f) Parents’ concerns or objections to anything in the programme should be addressed firstly to the delegated senior person or the headteacher. If the matter is not resolved, the Governors can be contacted and the school’s complaints procedures followed.

Schedule (D) Implementation of the policy

1. Law and guidance

- a) The Governors of St Columba’s Catholic Primary School are required by Section 241(5) of the Education Act 1993 to formulate and keep an up to date policy on Sex and Relationships Education in school.
- b) A guide to the law for School Governors (DCSF, January 2008) says:

“32. Governing bodies and headteachers of maintained schools providing primary

education must decide whether Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), beyond that set out in the statutory national curriculum for science, should be included in their school's curriculum and, if so, what it should consist of and how it should be organised. They must keep a written record of their decisions. Schools should consult parents about their SRE programmes.”

[Note – this provision may change in 2009/10.]

The DCSF issued guidance on SRE to all maintained schools in July 2000. The guidance is underpinned by the Learning and Skills Act 2000, which gives headteachers and governors a statutory responsibility to have regard to the guidance when developing their SRE policies and to protect pupils from inappropriate teaching materials. Copies of the guidance can be downloaded from www.dcsf.gov.uk/sreguidance”

It is important to recognise that the guidance is not a list of what is legally required, only of what must be considered. Therefore, the governors must read the guidance and declare that the Sex and Relationships Education Policy of the school of which they are a governor has been developed with regard to the Guidance produced by the DCSF.

2. Initial assessment

In the event that an assessment of children made before beginning a Sex and Relationships Education programme is undertaken it will entail consultation with parents of children's needs at their level of development. Where direct pupil evaluation is to form part of this assessment it will be done with express parental consent. It will not in any way be invasive of the pupil's privacy and any information gathered will not allow individual pupils to be identified.

3. Safeguarding

Because of day to day contact with children, schools are well placed to observe signs of abuse, changes in behaviour or failure to develop. Parents should be aware that where it appears to a member of staff that a child may have been abused, the school is required as part of the local Safeguarding Procedures, to report their concern to the Children's Services Department immediately. Confidentiality must not prevent action if a child is thought to be 'at risk'. The safety and welfare of the child is of paramount importance.

4. Equal Opportunities

The school provides equal opportunities for all pupils in the area of SRE at a level appropriate to their age and understanding.

5. Citizenship

Education for Citizenship includes social and moral responsibility. Pupils are encouraged to learn from the very beginning, self confidence and social and moral responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, towards those in authority and towards each other.

6. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Lancaster Diocese Education Service and subsequently by the governors who seek to be aware of legal changes and respond appropriately. Before any significant change of this policy, advice will be

sought from the Diocese of Lancaster Education Service.

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