

Education for relationships

All pupils will be enabled to **value their sexuality** as a God-given gift which permeates every area of their life. **They are entitled** to education in personal relationships - sex education, sexual abuse, HIV/AIDS, the rate of teenage pregnancies, abortion, and other sensitive issues which need to be addressed.

This policy is a reflection of the **importance** the school attaches to education in personal relationships. It is impossible to prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life without recognising their need to appreciate and understand their own sexuality. The programme must therefore address this issue **in every year** of their time in school, so that the education received is gradual, positive, and commensurate with their physical and mental development.

The teachings of the Catholic Church will underlie the education provided in personal relationships and sex education. This will not be taught in isolation, but will always be taught in the context of moral education with an emphasis on **Christian values within marriage and family life**.

The school acknowledges the **primary responsibility of Parents** with regards to education in personal relationships (sex education) for their children, and the fact that parents have the right to withdraw their children from any part of the sex education programme. However the staff also recognise the fact that the vast majority of parents rely on school, almost exclusively, to provide education in personal relationships (sex education) for their children. This policy endeavours to realise the wishes of these parents.

Care and sensitive attention must be given to pupils who find themselves in situations where they need to seek individual help. If such situations arise, and cannot be dealt with in the classroom, then a Senior Pastoral Colleague should be consulted before any action is taken. All members of staff must ensure that any advice given does not impinge on the rights of parents. However, if the child is distressed or a member of staff has cause to suspect distress, the Headteacher should be notified without delay.

Members of staff must not enter into pacts of confidentiality with pupils if the information disclosed places the pupil in moral or physical risk or in breach of the law, or if by doing so the member of staff would be usurping the rights or responsibilities of parents.

Where the school becomes aware that a pupil is engaging in an activity which is likely to place them in "**moral or physical risk or in breach of the law**", steps will be taken to inform the parents, and, in consultation with them, to devise a suitable plan of action.

Education in personal relationships (sex education) is by its very nature a **cross-curricular theme**. While the Religious Education (R.E.) Department, the Science Department and the Personal and Social Education (PSE) Department have the major responsibilities for delivering this Curriculum, other departments also have an input. It is essential therefore, that all departments have a good working knowledge of this policy document. It is inevitable, particularly in secondary schools, that the teaching of apparently unrelated topics will occasionally lead to a **discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour**. Provided that such discussion is relatively limited and set within the context of the subject concerned, it will not constitute part of a programme of sex education.

The Governors appreciate the difficulties faced by teachers in **answering questions** (some of which will inevitably be asked out of mischief) on sensitive issues in the classroom situation. In

deciding how to respond, teachers will need to consider factors such as the age of the pupil/pupils, the appropriateness of the question, and whether or not it would be better answered during or after the lesson. The Governors have every confidence in the professional and ethical judgements of the teaching staff, in their consideration of these and other matters, and their ability to handle such situations within the spirit of this policy.

Where outside speakers are used to deliver part of this curriculum, they will be made familiar with this policy, and asked to make their contribution in a manner which is in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church.

A full copy of the policy and details of the sex education programme are available from the school office.