



# Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

<b>Review of Policy</b>	October 2021
<b>Ratification of Policy by the Board of Governors</b>	November 2021
<b>Next Review Date</b>	October 2022

## Mission Statement

St Mary's continues the mission of Christ entrusted to the Church to "go and teach" and seeks to foster and promote Christian spirituality within an ethos of inclusivity and pastoral care. Integral to the vision that underpins all aspects of life in our Catholic school is the dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God. It includes a recognition of the self-worth and value of every child and the fostering of the key values of Catholic education. Through the promotion of mutual understanding and respect for all ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, we seek to create an inclusive and supportive environment in which all members of our school community feel valued. We aim to provide a caring and safe environment in which all children can grow in self-esteem, independence and confidence. Our care for the children enables their holistic development; spiritually, physically, intellectually, morally, emotionally and socially. Arising from this commitment to develop each individual child, a culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists which is underpinned by a clear expectation that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability. By learning, praying and playing together, we grow as a community in which children, parents, staff and governors demonstrate a commitment to achieving high standards, mutual care and support of each other whilst being constantly invited to rediscover what it is to follow Christ and to give witness to the centrality of Gospel values.

## Context

The school's RSE policy has been developed within the context of current legislation as outlined below.

- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**

The UNCRC (1989) states in Articles 28 & 29 that children and young people are entitled to good quality education while at the same time acknowledging (Article 24e) that parents have the right to 'access education' for their children.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Protocol 1, Article 2 of the Right to Education states,

No person shall be denied a right to an education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure that such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

- **RSE Guidance Document for Primary Schools (NI) 2021 -Catholic Schools' Trustee Service**

- **Northern Ireland RSE Curriculum**

Since September 2007, the (revised) Northern Ireland Curriculum in all grant-aided schools as required under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, establishes Relationships and Sexuality Education as a statutory component of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding.

In 2015, the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), supporting the delivery of the NI curriculum, provided non-statutory guidance for schools on delivering PDMU which includes information on Relationships and Sexuality Education. In this 2015 'Relationships & Sexuality Education Guidance' CCEA stated that:

The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives. Relationships and Sexuality Education is firmly grounded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, where the central focus is on the emotional development of children, health and safety, relationships with others, and the development of moral thinking, values and actions.

- **Department of Education NI Policy and Guidelines**

The Department of Education policies, *Every School a Good School* (2009) and *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education* (CRED) 2011, outline how each school should provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment with an inherent respect for difference and the diversity of family life in today's society.

Issued by the Department of Education in June 2013, the DENI Circular 2013/16 states:

'The Department requires each school to have in place its own written policy on how it will address the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education.'

The circular also states that Relationships and Sexuality Education 'should be taught in harmony with the ethos of the school and reflect the moral and religious principles held by parents and school management authorities'.

The circular reminds schools that RSE is an integral part of the revised curriculum, recognises the importance of RSE in the development of young people and states that it must prepare them to view relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

This circular also points out that all pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

More recently, DENI Circular 2015/21 and CCEA (2015) provides specific guidance for schools in the preparation of the RSE policy.

## Rationale

St. Mary's Primary School, Cabragh, views the development and implementation of a policy in Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) as an important step towards achieving our aim to develop all aspects of a young person's personality and growth. The morals and values of our Catholic ethos are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE in St. Mary's. The sacredness of human life and the uniqueness of each human being is at the heart of the school's teaching of RSE. Sexuality is an integral part of the human person and affects our capacity to give and receive love.

The RSE programme is structured to teach, nurture, advise, guide and enable the children to celebrate their faith. Accordingly, the children are introduced to Jesus as the model for living an ethical life and the moral teachings of the Church to provide them with a framework for living. RSE will be firmly embedded in the PDMU and the RE Curriculum as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils. The RSE Policy takes account of the Equality Act NI 2006 and the guidance from the Equality Commission in March 2009 and seeks to promote inclusivity, equality and respect for all pupils. The pupils learn in a safe and secure environment and all are treated with respect and dignity. There is a direct link to Child Protection issues which are addressed through the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures. The school seeks to provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment in which there is an inherent respect for difference and the diversity of family life in today's society. Issues of bullying or exclusion are addressed through the Anti-Bullying Policy.

St Mary's Primary School is committed to the education of children regardless of race, religion, gender or status. All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life.

In line with our school's ethos, RSE will provide opportunities which enable pupils to:

- form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework consistent with our Catholic ethos.
- learn how to develop and enjoy personal relationships and friendships which are based on responsibility and mutual respect.
- build the foundations for developing more positive personal relationships in later life.
- make positive, responsible choices about themselves and others and the way they live their lives.

In partnership with parents, we aim to provide children and young people with a positive and prudent sexual education which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person.

## The Morals and Values Underpinning the RSE Policy

The whole school community shares in the mission of faith formation. Our teaching of RSE will enable pupils to clarify their beliefs and develop a respect for and interest in the beliefs of others. Pupils will be given opportunities to explore values and attitudes and to consider how adhering to this moral code will affect their behaviour and their treatment of others.

Children in St. Mary's will be taught RSE within a framework which models and encourages the following values:

- A respect for God and creation.
- To be able to distinguish between what is right and wrong.
- A respect for self.
- A respect for others.
- Self-discipline.
- A responsibility for one's own actions and an understanding of the long term and short-term consequences of their actions.
- Non-exploitation in relationships.
- Commitment, trust and bonding within relationships.
- A development of critical self-awareness for themselves and others.
- Compassion, forgiveness, mercy and care when people do not conform to their way of life.

### Definition of RSE

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a complex and vitally important area of a school's curriculum. RSE is about more than simply educating children about biological sexual reproduction, particularly in primary schools. Although it is often referred to as 'sex education', this terminology is misleading. Relationships and Sexuality Education is defined as a lifelong process encompassing:

- the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills; and
- the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

RSE is life-long learning about physical, moral and emotional development. RSE should provide young people with the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not simply intimate relationships. It should enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend.

## Why Relationships and Sexuality Education is important:

- **Respects the rights of children**

The United Kingdom Government, including Northern Ireland, is a signatory to the 1989 *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) and has agreed to uphold the rights of children and young people as set out in the Convention. This means that all children and young people in Northern Ireland have a right to a good quality education in accordance with the Convention.

- **Promotes a better understanding of diversity and inclusion**

Schools are increasingly diverse spaces, reflecting wider societal change. This is acknowledged in the Department of Education's *Community Relations, Equality and Diversity in Education Policy* (2011). A school should provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment: it should foster respect for difference, challenge prejudicial attitudes, and promote equality of opportunity for all pupils. If schools are to encourage children to be confident and respectful of themselves and others, and prepare them for life after school, the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education should be inclusive of all differences regardless of race, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, culture, gender and sexual orientation. Schools should also recognise the diversity of family life in today's society. All staff must be sensitive and respectful of difference, ensuring that no pupil ever feels or is excluded, or experiences bullying due to their family or home circumstances.

- **Helps children to keep themselves safer in the digital world**

Technology plays an integral role in the lives of many children in Northern Ireland today: they use the internet to watch programmes, play games, listen and download music, carry out research for school, chat with their friends, and make new friends. However, whilst technological advancements provide many opportunities, along with opportunity comes risk, particularly if the children's activity is unsupervised. Cyberbullying, the use of chat rooms, online grooming and child exploitation, sexting, access to inappropriate content, the acting out of inappropriate sexualised behaviours, and the sending and receiving of explicit images are just some of the ways in which online and digital technology can negatively affect the lives of children.

Through Relationships and Sexuality Education, children should be taught 'keeping safe' messages about how to behave safely and responsibly in the digital world which plays such an integral role in their lives. Children should be able to identify potential risks to their safety, and be aware of the strategies they can use to protect themselves.

- **Provides reliable, accurate and timely age-appropriate information**

Although there is great emphasis in primary schools on friendships and healthy relationships in Relationships and Sexuality Education, schools should also give children opportunities to learn and understand how and why the body grows and develops. This knowledge forms part of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding theme of 'Health, Growth and Change' in the latter part of Key Stage 2. Every child is unique and develops physically and emotionally at his or her own pace. However, as the average age for puberty is 8-12 years old for girls and 9-14 years old for boys, schools must schedule learning about puberty before its

onset, during Key Stage 2. On average, most girls begin menstruating when they are 12 years old; however, approximately 10 percent begin menstruating in primary school, some as young as eight years old. Research shows that one third of girls are not told about menstruation by their parents or carers, and 10 percent of girls have no preparation at all before their first period. For any girl, menstruating in school can be distressing, particularly if it happens unexpectedly. However, this distress is magnified for girls of primary school age, particularly if they are not prepared for the physical, emotional and practical consequences. To help ease this distress, schools should put arrangements in place to support girls, for example access to sanitary supplies, sanitary disposal facilities in toilets, and spare underwear. Teachers also need to be aware of and sensitive to the physical, emotional and practical needs of girls during menstruation – these may include asking permission to leave class, not feeling comfortable doing PE lessons, mood changes, irritable behaviour, and lack of concentration. All girls should know which staff members they can go to if they are menstruating in school.

- **Helps children to recognise inappropriate behaviour and touch.**

Despite the fact that Article 34 of the UNCRC enshrines all children's rights to be protected from sexual abuse and exploitation, the reality is that the lives of many children in Northern Ireland are ruined by abuse and exploitation. Police data reveals that in the period 2008–2010, one in five sexual abuse offences reported in Northern Ireland involved children 0–9 years old. This data also tells us that approximately one fifth of all sexual abuse assaults against children in Northern Ireland are committed by a member of the child's immediate family; this is particularly the case for sexual abuse against very young children, with very similar patterns of victimisation for both girls and boys aged 0–11 years old.

Child sexual exploitation is also becoming increasingly evident in Northern Ireland. Child sexual exploitation is defined as 'a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/ or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse' (SBNI, 2014, page 7). Given the nature of the contact time between pupils and their teachers in the primary school setting, teachers are in a good position to observe possible behavioural changes and may be able to identify 'at risk' children at an early stage.

In 2011, the Department of Education commissioned a research study: *Keeping Safe: the Development of an Effective Preventative Curriculum in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland*. It found that, for the majority of children, a deficit exists in their understanding of the concept of 'keeping safe' This was particularly true of young children and children with special educational needs (SEN). The study found that whilst children associated 'keeping safe' with physical safety and accident prevention, their understanding did not extend to issues such as bullying and inappropriate sexual touching from someone known to the child and 'stranger danger' The safety and welfare of a child is paramount; therefore, it is with a sense of urgency that schools should address this gap in understanding.

Through Relationships and Sexuality Education, children should develop an understanding of their own uniqueness. It is also vitally important that they know and understand that, even though they are young, their body belongs to them and them alone. Schools can play their part

in raising children's awareness of abuse and exploitation. When children learn about 'keeping safe' through boundaries and positive consent, it helps them to recognise what constitutes:

- appropriate and inappropriate behaviour;
- appropriate and inappropriate touch; and
- unwanted attention, or attention that makes them feel uncomfortable in any way.

Children must know what to do or who to go to if they feel unsafe at any time. Good practice includes displaying photos of the key staff children can approach in prominent areas throughout the school, or having a 'worry box' in the classroom, school office or at safeguarding display boards.

### Aims of RSE

In line with the ethos of St. Mary's and CCEA guidelines, the Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy of St. Mary's Primary School aims to:

- promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework.
- help all pupils to appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God.
- enable young people to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God and that love is the central basis of all relationships.
- enable children to form healthy and respectful friendships and relationships.
- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- foster an understanding of and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- foster and develop mutual respect and understanding.
- develop a respect for difference, gender and race within the school and community.
- enable the children to identify and manage a range of feelings.
- help children to learn about keeping themselves safe and know what to do or who to go to if they feel unsafe.
- help all children to value family life in its diversity and the gift of marriage.
- help young people recognise, understand and prepare for the body changes that they (and their friends) will undergo in the years ahead (puberty).
- promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed.
- foster and promote their moral development.
- promote responsible behaviour and the ability to make fully informed decisions.
- promote an appreciation of the responsibilities of parenthood.
- develop an appreciation for the value and sacredness of human life and the wonder of birth.

## Objectives of RSE

Effective Relationships and Sexuality Education is essential if children are to value themselves as individuals and are to make responsible and well-informed decisions about their lives.

In line with the ethos of St. Mary's and CCEA guidelines, the Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum should enable pupils to:

- Acquire and develop knowledge and understanding of self.
- Develop a positive sense of self awareness, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others.
- Understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in wider contexts.
- Develop an awareness of the diversity of family life and family patterns.
- Develop strategies to make decisions, solve problems and implement actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- Acquire and improve skills of communication and social interaction.
- Acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, growth and development
- Develop coping strategies to protect self and others from various forms of abuse (inappropriate behaviours, sexual abuse and exploitation).
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change.
- Develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships.

## Skills Promoted

The RSE curriculum should enable pupils to develop the skills necessary to form and maintain relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding health and well-being. Pupils should also be helped to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values.

Pupils in St. Mary's will be given opportunities to develop:

- **Communication skills** - Listening to other's points of view, putting one's own view forward, dealing with conflict peacefully and being assertive.
- **Decision making skills** - Making good choices with the relevant information at hand, making moral judgments wisely in contexts and then putting them into practice, acting responsibly as an individual or as a member of a group.
- **Interpersonal skills** - Managing healthy relationships with confidence and with effectiveness.

## Consultation

As parents/carers are the primary educators of their children, we will endeavour to engage in full consultation with them regarding aims, objectives and the teaching programme of this policy and their views will be considered when implementing and reviewing this policy.

## Responsibility for Teaching the RSE Programme

### **Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors should foster and support the development of an RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents. It should also facilitate the consultative process whereby the school community can respond and contribute. The governors should examine and approve the completed policy and programme prior to their implementation in the school and review the policy at regular intervals.

### **Principal and Senior Management Team**

As with all subject areas, it is the role of the Principal to make possible a coherent and co-ordinated approach to RSE in keeping with the ethos of the school. The Principal and Senior Management Team co-ordinate the school's approach to RSE and consults the Board of Governors, staff, parent(s)/carer(s) and health professionals, as appropriate.

### **RSE Co-ordinator**

The Religious Education Co-Ordinator, Mrs Donna Quinn, is responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the Department of Education specifications and the programme designed for the pupils.

The RSE Co-ordinator's role includes:

- upholding and ensuring that the programme is taught in accordance with the school's Catholic ethos;
- ensuring that the programme is taught effectively and is appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils;
- liaising with the Board of Governors, the Principal, the Vice Principal/SMT, all staff, parents and health and educational visitors on RSE matters;
- attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members;
- organising training for staff as and when appropriate;
- liaising with outside agencies where appropriate.

## **Designated Teacher/Special Needs Co-ordinator**

The Designated (Miss Lauren Cush) / Deputy Designated Teacher (Mrs Donna Quinn) and Special Needs Co-ordinator (Mrs Eilis Kelly) will provide relevant information which will ensure that the needs of all pupils are met.

## **Chaplain (Fr. Patrick Hannigan)**

The role of the chaplain is to:

- support the teaching of RSE where possible;
- meet with the RSE co-ordinator to discuss the RSE programme and its delivery in school;
- witness to Gospel values.

## **RSE in the Northern Ireland Curriculum**

Since September 2007, the (revised) Northern Ireland Curriculum in all grant-aided schools as required under the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, establishes Relationships and Sexuality Education as a statutory component of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding.

In 2015, the Council for Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), supporting the delivery of the NI curriculum, provided non-statutory guidance for schools on delivering PDMU which includes information on Relationships and Sexuality Education. In this 2015 'Relationships & Sexuality Education Guidance' CCEA stated that: The Northern Ireland Curriculum aims to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is firmly grounded in Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, where the central focus is on the emotional development of children, health and safety, relationships with others, and the development of moral thinking, values and actions.

## **Curriculum Content**

In the context of the ethos of the catholic school, St Mary's Primary School, have decided, through consultation and agreement with our parents, Board of Governors, principal and teachers that RSE will be delivered through our religious education programme 'Grow in Love' while linking with the significant and relevant areas of the curriculum such as PDMU and Safeguarding. There are many RSE links in the CCEA resource 'Living Learning Together' which helps to support the delivery of the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding area of learning.

**Connected Learning Opportunities-**There are many opportunities within the Northern Ireland Curriculum for other Areas of Learning to link with Relationships and Sexuality Education, which allows for a more connected learning experience for pupils. Teachers in St. Mary's will enable pupils to explore sensitive and complex issues through a variety of different lenses. For example, children will explore a range of ways of communicating and expressing feelings and

emotions through the Arts, including art and design, music, and drama. Through Language and Literacy, children will develop the vocabulary needed to discuss emotions and feelings through talking and listening, reading, writing, drama, and role play.

RSE will be delivered in a holistic, cross curricular way, ensuring that teaching is at all times appropriate to the maturity and understanding of the pupils.

Teachers will cover themes in Circle Time, RE and PDMU. We encourage active learning strategies e.g. mind mapping, discussion techniques, reporting back, listening exercises, circle time, role-play, questionnaires and quizzes.

St. Mary's will use resources that reflect the ethos of the school and are age-appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive to the pupils' needs and experiences.

The selection of teaching resources should be:

- consistent with the school's RSE policy and the aims and objectives of the RSE programme;
- consistent with the school's morals and values framework;
- appropriate to pupils' age, level of understanding and maturity;
- factually correct and respectful of its audience;
- likely to appeal to pupils in terms of appropriate language level, images, attitudes and values, maturity, contexts and situations, and the knowledge required;
- complementary to the existing programmes which the school offers;
- encouraging consideration of a range of issues, attitudes and beliefs pertinent to the topics covered.

The following outline teaching programme, illustrates the topics covered through the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum in St. Mary's Primary School. Topics and themes are often repeated at regular intervals. The sequence in which ideas are presented below is not intended to imply a teaching order.

### **Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 (P1-P4)**

#### **Myself:**

- How I grow, feed, move and use my senses; caring for myself, for example: hygiene, sleep, exercise.
- Their own and others' feelings/emotions and how their actions affect others.
- Naming parts of the body (basic) - developing an agreed language for our bodies.
- Being myself - I am unique, my self-esteem, self-confidence, independence, respect and caring for myself.
- Similarities and differences between myself and others, for example: uniqueness, fingerprints, gender issues, different rates of growth.
- An introduction to the stages of human development - changes as we grow, for example:

baby, child, teenager, adult, mother/father, grandparents.

- Recognising moods, feelings and concerns and developing a language and an appropriate manner of expressing them, for example: what do I do if I feel sad or angry?
- Personal likes and dislikes.
- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- The importance of keeping healthy and strategies and skills for keeping healthy.

### **My Relationships:**

- My family, special people in my life - what they do for me and what I do for them.
- Friendships, getting on with each other for example: communicating, playing together, listening, co-operating and sharing.
- Ageing - how do we know that things are alive, dead, young and old.
- Loss and mourning - death of a person or a pet (Note: situations of the pupils should be considered prior to introducing this topic).
- Respect and caring for family members and friends for example: caring for a new baby.
- Bullies and what to do about them.
- Personal safety - simple skills and practices to maintain personal safety.
- The difference between good and bad touches.
- Realise that adults and older children are not always friends; the potential danger of relationships with strangers or acquaintances.
- Strategies which pupils might use to protect themselves from potentially dangerous situations.

### **My Community/Environment:**

- Awareness of different types of families and the roles of individuals within families.
- Keeping safe for example: dangerous places, dangerous situations, the adults who will help, how to get help from others.
- Rules at home, at school and in the community.

Respect and caring for people in the community, e.g. elderly people.

## Key Stage 2 (P5-P7)

### **Myself:**

- The importance of keeping healthy and safe.
- My body, how it works and how to keep it healthy.
- The physical, social and emotional changes that occur during puberty (girls and boys).
- Myself and my peers - different rates of growth and physical development, maturity.
- Valuing and respecting myself, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Feelings for example: things that make me happy, sad, excited, embarrassed, angry, scared; expressing our feelings, showing love and affection.
- Gender roles.
- Making choices - the influences on me and the consequences of actions for oneself and others.
- Distinguishing between right and wrong.
- Secrets - knowing the difference between good and bad secrets, what to do about bad secrets.

### **My Relationships:**

- Identifying the positive traits of friendship and their corresponding values.
- Differences and similarities in people; the need to respect other people's views, emotions and feelings.
- Families and how they behave - what family members expect of each other.
- The meaning of friendship and loyalty; making and maintaining friendships and social relationships for example: identifying and understanding pressures and influences, taking account of other people's point of view.
- Handling difficult situations for example: teasing, bullying, death of a family member.
- The meaning of relationships within families, between friends and in the community.
- Behaviour - what constitutes appropriate and non-appropriate physical contact.
- Identifying dangers and risks within relationships.
- Being assertive in defending individual rights and beliefs.
- People who can help pupils when they have anxieties, concerns or questions.

## **My Community/Environment:**

- Appreciation of the family in relation to the school and the wider community.
- Cultural differences in families and family relationships.
- Helping agencies who can support families and individuals in different circumstances.

### **Use of Outside Agencies**

Where appropriate, sensitive issues may be addressed by experts from outside agencies, for example, Love for Life. Planning and materials to be used will be discussed in advance with the class teacher/RE coordinator. St. Mary's Primary School will ensure that the contribution from outside agencies are in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school and that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice. *All outside visitors/speakers must be approved by the Principal/RSE co-ordinator.*

All external agencies supporting RSE will be asked to sign a service agreement (see **Appendix 2**) agreeing with the RSE policy of the school and the underpinning ethos of the school. This record will be kept in a safe place as part of the delivery of RSE and for authenticity.

Parents/carers will be made aware in advance of the use of outside agencies. St. Mary's will explain the type of activities which will take place to ensure that parents and carers have the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have before the visit. Doing this will also have the added benefit of letting parents or carers know what is going on and strengthen ties between home and school. During the session the teacher/s will be present at all times. Afterwards the teacher/s will provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss their experience/s and honestly evaluate the session/s. St. Mary's will use their pupil feedback to inform future planning and provision along with any evaluation carried out by the outside agency/individual.

In St. Mary's the 'Love for Life' Organisation will deliver the 'What's Inside 'P7 RSE Programme, 'Choices' 'P6 RSE Programme and the 'Wonder' P3/4 RSE Programme. Parental consent will be sought beforehand. (See **Appendices 3 & 4** Information Letter to Primary 6 & 7 Parents)

### **Meeting The Needs of Pupils**

To ensure that the learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant to all pupils, the RSE programme should be developmental, accessible and be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils. It should meet the needs of both genders and be a positive experience for all participants.

**Supporting the Needs of Boys-** The content of the RSE curriculum in St. Mary's will be carefully planned and will be relevant for boys as well as girls. Lessons will include activities which encourage boys' participation, develop their confidence to ask questions and, very importantly, talk about their concerns and feelings.

From an early age, boys and girls learn what is considered to be appropriate behaviour from the significant adults in their lives. However, sex education has tended to focus primarily on

the concerns of girls. In order to redress this imbalance, it is important that within the RSE programme activities are included to allow boys to talk about their interests, concerns and feelings. It is important to acknowledge that male and female perspectives may exist on issues and to respect the reasons for such differences. In St. Mary's, sessions with 'Love for Life' will also be included to explain the physical and emotional changes at puberty to boys (Year 7/Term 3).

### **Working in mixed and single-gender groups**

Mostly, St. Mary's Primary School will teach Relationships and Sexuality Education in mixed groups, where boys and girls learn together so as to gain an understanding and appreciation of each other's perspectives. However, there will be times when pupils will work in single-gender groups, particularly when they are exploring 'girl' or 'boy' issues. This single-gender setting will reduce embarrassment and awkwardness for pupils.

### **Personal backgrounds and cultural practices**

Teachers in St. Mary's Primary School will be sensitive to the personal circumstances and cultural background of our pupils. We recognise how pupils' views and values are influenced by their informal learning experiences and by the views of family, peers, community and the media. For example, for some pupils it would be inappropriate to address some Relationships and Sexuality Education issues in a mixed gender lesson because of cultural or religious beliefs. Other pupils may have same-sex parents or carers, so teachers in St. Mary's will be mindful of this.

### **The Classroom Environment**

In St. Mary's Primary School, we believe it is essential that teachers create a classroom environment which is supportive, where self-esteem is fostered and where the pupils feel valued and affirmed. The climate of the classroom should promote mutual respect and the dignity of each individual. It is important to create an atmosphere in the classroom, which allows all pupils to feel comfortable to express opinions and feelings in a secure and safe manner and to explore issues which may be sensitive and personal. Every effort should be made to ensure that the whole group is at ease, with pupils showing respect for each other and realising their responsibilities to each other. St. Mary's will use strategies such as circle time to help to create a positive and safe learning environment.

Ground rules should be agreed to help to minimise embarrassment and encourage the respect of each other's opinion. Realistic scenarios, case studies, role-play, drama, videos and stories can be used to enable pupils to discuss issues without personal disclosure.

Important considerations are the:

- degree of trust, respect and positive regard for pupils;
- relationships between the teacher and pupils, and between the pupils themselves;
- need for clear expectations, goals and learning objectives;
- use of teaching and learning methods which involve pupils actively in their own learning and encourage the consideration of attitudes and values and the ability to make informed and healthy decisions; and

### **Delivering Inclusive RSE**

Relationships and Sexuality Education in St. Mary's will promote inclusivity, equality and respect for all pupils. Children and young people must feel comfortable and confident in themselves without fear of being bullied or being viewed as different.

St. Mary's will handle the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity in a sensitive, non-confrontational and reassuring way. St. Mary's will teach about difference in Relationships and Sexuality Education and in the wider Personal Development and Mutual Understanding curriculum.

All pupils, regardless of their sexual orientation, have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Equality and respect will be valued and actively promoted in St. Mary's. Staff will challenge and discourage all forms of stereotyping, including the use of homophobic or sexist language. Through stories, themes, assemblies etc., the children will regularly encounter opportunities to clarify and develop their attitudes and values relating to equality issues:

- gender
- race
- age
- disability
- religion
- sexual orientation
- diverse families

## Dealing with homophobic language and bullying

School should be a happy environment where children feel safe and secure: a place where difference is celebrated and where all children can focus on their learning. Homophobic bullying and the use of homophobic language will not be tolerated in St. Mary's Primary School. Homophobic bullying is 'any language, conduct, or behaviour used to exclude, demean or threaten a person based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation' Homophobic language can have a devastating impact on children who may have lesbian, gay or bisexual parents or carers/relatives. In line with the school's Anti-Bullying policy, St. Mary's will deal with all complaints of homophobic language and bullying promptly, seriously, sympathetically, confidentially and effectively.

## Special Education Needs (SEN)

RSE is a priority for all our pupils in St. Mary's, and this includes learners with SEN who have social, emotional and mental health needs and learning disabilities.

St. Mary's Primary School is committed to the education of children which adequately prepares them for adult life, regardless of their age, gender, culture, sexual orientation, disability status, religion or social class.

We will ensure that children with SEN in St. Mary's Primary School will have appropriate, accessible and relevant Relationships and Sexuality Education.

We recognise that pupils with SEN are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation. Perpetrators often target the most vulnerable people, who as a result may experience exploitation, abuse or bullying as they:

- are often more dependent on others for their personal needs;
- may not be aware that what is happening to them is wrong;
- may not be aware that help is available; or
- may have difficulty in communicating or expressing concerns about what is happening to them.

Therefore, in St. Mary's, we will ensure that learners with SEN have the opportunity to understand what is right and wrong from an early age, through RSE that is appropriate for their age and ability.

At St. Mary's we will use everyday opportunities to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills of SEN pupils to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative behaviour;
- help develop their own prevention strategies to stay safe;
- recognise and build healthy relationships; and

- know who they can talk to and go to for help.

RSE for learners with SEN should be accessible, appropriate and relevant to them and their life experiences. St. Mary's will adapt resources and teaching activities to ensure that there are no barriers to participation or learning for pupils with SEN compared to their peers. We will ensure that RSE is accessible to all and is sensitive to the different needs of individual pupils in respect to pupils' different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances; for example, their own sexual orientation, faith or culture and is taught in a way that does not subject pupils to discrimination.

Lessons will also help children to realise the nature and consequences of discrimination, teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviours (including cyber-bullying), use of prejudice-based language and how to respond and ask for help.

In today's connected world, pupils with SEN will be made aware of the challenges of the internet and online identities, the influence of peers and peer pressure, and the influence of media including social media. The RSE curriculum in St. Mary's will aim to build confidence and resilience in pupils with SEN.

### **Confidentiality and Child Protection/Safeguarding Children**

At St Mary's Primary School, we respect the child's right to privacy. A key rule to agree in advance of any discussion is that no one will be expected to ask or answer any personal questions. It is equally important that the teacher shares this right and never feels obliged to impart information about his/her own personal life.

However, as teachers, we should not promise confidentiality.

Where a teacher in St. Mary's suspects that a child is a victim of or is at risk of abuse, they are required to follow the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and immediately inform the Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Miss Lauren Cush) or Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection (Mrs Donna Quinn).

If a child confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, the child must be told, sensitively, that the matter must be reported to the appropriate agencies. Decisions can then be taken in accordance with the procedures detailed in the school's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy.

### **Responding to Pupil's Questions and Sensitive Issues**

The school's RSE policy and approach to teaching and learning will be sensitive to specific issues that arise in the life of pupils and in the overall life of the school.

When teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education, the natural inquisitiveness of children often results in the teachers being asked many questions which they had not planned for. There will be occasions when teachers will have to use their own discretion and judgement about how to deal with particular questions raised by a pupil or a group of pupils. It is important that the type of advice and the manner in which it is given is supportive of the role

of the parents. In all cases, teachers should encourage pupils to discuss any issues and concerns they might have with their parents, if this is appropriate.

Teachers should exercise their professional judgement: for example, they may need to decide whether it is appropriate to deal with the question in a whole-class forum, through circle time, or if it may be more appropriate to respond on an individual basis, or to arrange time for group discussion outside class time. The teacher may also wish to discuss the questions the children have asked with the parents or carers and/or a senior member of staff to ascertain how they would like to handle the matter. The school nurse may also be approached for advice.

Teachers are not medical professionals and will not give personal medical advice to any pupil. Teachers will advise pupils to seek advice from parents or carers and health professionals. If any question asked raises child protection issues, this should be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

While it is important to create an environment in which pupils can discuss issues openly, teachers may not always be able to answer all questions about issues and should set appropriate boundaries.

St. Mary's Primary School will:

- Teach the fundamental principle of respect for human persons.
- Challenge any discriminatory remarks.
- Deal firmly with any acts of bullying, including homophobic, transphobic and cyberbullying.
- Follow school procedures for accessing outside support for any pupil requiring additional help.
- Support the parents. Parents may want to speak to someone at the school about one or more of these issues.
- Arrange a meeting with the parents and relevant support agencies to consider any appropriate measures of support that may be needed to ensure the needs of the pupil are met.
- Follow school procedures for monitoring the well-being of pupil/s.
- Provide time and safe spaces for young people, in an age and stage appropriate way, to engage at a deep level with these issues, to dialogue with their peers and their teacher around them and to be invited into a rich understanding of the Church's teaching in these areas.

## Relationships Between Home, School and Community

The effectiveness of this policy and its implementation is dependent on a collaborative process involving teachers, parents/carers, governors and other educational and health professionals. Each of the partners has distinctive contributions to make.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process which begins in the home. The home exerts a major influence on all aspects of a child's life, particularly in the sphere of Relationships and Sexuality Education. However, in view of the significant amount of time children spend in school, parents or carers entrust teachers to help educate their children in this sensitive and important area of their lives. The role of the school must be considered to be complementary to that of parents or carers.

St. Mary's will actively promote the implementation of RSE and inform parents/carers of the content, timing and the delivery of the programme in order to enable them to support the work of the school and to enable parents to discuss the topics and issues raised by the programme with their children.

The RSE policy will be published on the school website and made available for parents/carers to download.

ETI states that 'there is a need for parents to be involved more in developing the Personal Development curriculum in school and for them to be supported so that they can help keep their children safe outside of school hours. St. Mary's will employ strategies such as:

- providing up-to-date parent or carer-friendly information leaflets, which would encourage parents or carers to discuss any issues which may arise in the classroom with their children;
- holding awareness-raising workshops, for example, the 'Birds and Bees' RSE workshop delivered by Love for Life and E-Safety parent workshops delivered by REIM.
- sharing resources to educate parents or carers on, for example, how to ensure that their children are using social media safely and responsibly. These resources are published on the school website.

### Withdrawal from RSE

Whilst Relationships and Sexuality Education is a statutory component of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, parents or carers have a right to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes. We will endeavour to take account of the wishes of any parent who wishes their child to be excused from particular, or all, sex education classes.

Any issues raised regarding the content of an element of RSE, or other related programmes, will be addressed and resolved in a positive manner as part of the consultation process. Although full consultation may have been undertaken, a parent may still request that their child is excused from participating in some or all of the RSE lessons. In this circumstance, the school should discuss the nature of the parent's concerns, attempt to deal with any misunderstandings, identify the specific issues and lessons which are problematic and explain the implications for the pupil in terms of the parts of the statutory programmes of study which will be missed. The social and emotional effects of exclusion should be considered, as well as the likelihood that pupils will discuss the content of RSE lessons outside the classroom.

Parents should consider that the child will hear their peers' version of what happened or what was said in the classes, rather than the safe and reliable source of the teacher's.

As a school we actively promote the implementation of RSE and strongly discourage withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parent/carer concerns.

### **Relationship to other Policies and other Curriculum Subjects**

To ensure consistency all school policies should strive to be consistent and coherent within the framework of the overall school development plan. The RSE policy is developed in this context and shares links with, the following policies:

- Religious Education
- Teaching and Learning
- Confidentiality Policy
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- Pastoral Care Programme
- Health Education
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- Internet Safety Policy/E-safety Policy
- World Around Us
- PDMU
- Homework Policy
- Use of outside agencies and vetting arrangements

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Team as part of its evaluation of the school's policies and procedures. The Board of Governors will have due regard to any updated guidance issued by DE, CCEA and/or the Catholic Schools' Support Service and revise the policy in light of this guidance as required

### **Staff Training**

Training needs will be considered and will be accessed using the Education Authority, Public Health Agency and/or other appropriate health agencies. Where outside Agencies are used for training purposes, their remit will be clear and will reflect the ethos of the school.

## Appendix 1 Statutory Curricular Requirements for PDMU - RSE

<b>Foundation Stage</b>
<b>Theme 1: Self Awareness</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: themselves and their personal attributes.
<b>Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their own and others' feelings and emotions.
<b>Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: The importance of keeping healthy.
<b>Theme 4a: Safety</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: How to keep safe in familiar and unfamiliar environments.
<b>Theme 5: Relationships</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their relationships with family and friends.
<b>Theme 8: Similarities and Differences</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: Similarities and differences.

<b>Key Stage 1</b>
<p><b>Theme 1: Self Awareness</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their self-esteem and self-confidence.</p>
<p><b>Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their own and others' feelings and emotions and how their actions affect others.</p>
<p><b>Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: strategies and skills for keeping healthy.</p>
<p><b>Theme 4a: Safety</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: strategies and skills for keeping safe.</p>
<p><b>Theme 5: Relationships</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: and initiating mutually satisfying relationships.</p>
<p><b>Theme 8: Similarities and Differences</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: Similarities and differences between people.</p>

<b>Key Stage 2</b>
<p><b>Theme 1: Self Awareness</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their self-esteem, self-confidence and how they develop as individuals.</p>
<p><b>Theme 2: Feelings and Emotions</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: their management of a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others.</p>
<p><b>Theme 4: Health, Growth and Change</b> Teachers should enable pupils to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in developing: how to sustain their health, growth and well-being.</p>

## Appendix 2

### Service Level Agreement for External Agencies

I/We acknowledge the school's ethos and policies of \_\_\_\_\_ and agree to abide by its ethos and policies:

- In working with young people and,
- In the delivery of the programmes outlined below:

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I am/we are, willing to provide in advance full details of material content to:

Senior Management, Teachers, Parents, Governors and other Appropriate Bodies and agree to fully implement any changes deemed necessary by the above representatives.

I accept the right of the school to withdraw the invitation issued to support the school in the education of our young people.

I/We formally accept the above terms of reference and in so doing I/We will acknowledge the agreement made.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (External Agency)

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

Countersigned \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal/Board of Governors)

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3- Information Letter to Primary 7 Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian

As part of our ongoing commitment to the Personal Development of our Primary 7 pupils, we are delighted that Love for Life will be visiting our school on \*\* **INSERT DATE/TIME.**

The fun and interactive ‘*What’s Inside?*’ programme aims to equip the Primary 7 pupils to make healthy choices and is a vital part of their learning before their transition to post-primary education.

During the workshop, topics covered will include: the development of a baby from conception, managing changes and emotions throughout puberty (including separate boys’ and girls’ puberty talks), and how to be confident and assertive in making healthy choices.

The main focus of the programme is to affirm the uniqueness of the individual and to encourage respect for themselves and others.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

All these topics will be delivered in a sensitive and age appropriate way. This programme is delivered firmly within the context of the Church’s teaching on sexuality.

Please come and talk to us if you have any concerns. We will be happy to discuss any part of the program. If you would like further information about the materials that we will be using, copies of the learning materials will be available on request from your class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

**PRINCIPAL**

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I would / would not like to come in to discuss the RSE program with my child’s class teacher.

I would / would not like a copy of the RSE resources.

I would / would not like to withdraw my child from RSE.

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of adult: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4 - Letter to P6 Parents- 'Choices and Changes' Programme

Dear Parent/Guardian

As part of our ongoing commitment to the Personal Development of our pupils, we are delighted that LOVE FOR LIFE will be visiting our school on \*\* INSERT DATE/TIME.

The P7 pupils will be receiving the 'What's Inside?' programme, which addresses the key issues of growing up, including puberty and how to make healthy choices in the face of increasing pressures as they move to their next school. Our P6 pupils have this to look forward to next year!

In addition to this, however, we felt that it would be appropriate and beneficial for our P6 class to avail of a shorter programme called 'Choices and Changes'. Choices and Changes is an introduction to the physical and emotional changes they can expect during puberty, offering support as they explore and develop an understanding about the choices and changes in their lives. The main focus will be on managing changes and emotions throughout puberty (including separate boys' and girls' puberty talks), and how to help and support one another in this time as well as encouraging them to seek support from trusted adults.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely