St. Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen

Relationships and Sexuality Policy

Adopted Date:	**December 2024**
Review Date:	**June 2028**

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School Name
Saint Joseph's High School Crossmaglen

School Address
77 Dundalk Road, Crossmaglen, Newry. Co. Down BT35 9HP

Date of Policy
December 2024

School Mission Statement
At Saint Joseph's High School we view 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 persons personality and growth. The morals and values of our Catholic ethos are the core principles that underpin the teaching of RSE. Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person that relate to being male and female and develops throughout life. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

In St. Joseph's High School, we recognise that parents/carers have the primary duty and right to be the first and principal educators of their children in this area. We will endeavor to help and support parents/carers in this important area of education. The attitude, beliefs and behaviour of pupils in all their relationships are primarily formed and greatly influenced by their experience within the family and the relationship they have with their parents/carers.

RSE in school is intended to supplement and complement what goes on at home.

In line with our school's ethos, RSE should provide opportunities that 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.

Formation of the policy
St Joseph's High School has consulted its staff members on the content of this policy with Head of Departments auditing their course content to identify where RSE is taught in their subject. (see Appendix 2)
There was a further consultation with the Board of Governors, parents and the student body.

Related Documents and Policies
The RSE policy is written in accordance with guidance provided in DE circulars 2001/15, 2001/15b, 2010/10, 2013/16 and 2015/22. It is also written in accordance with:

- *CCEA's guidance for post primary School on Relationships and Sexuality Education (2001)*
- *CCEA's guidance for post primary schools on Relationships and Sexuality Education: An update for Post-Primary Schools (2019)*
- *Catholic Schools Trustee Service guidance Relationships and Sexuality guidance document (2021)*
- *CCEA's guidance for post primary schools on Personal Development (2007)*
- *Report of an Evaluation of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Post-Primary Schools (ETI, 2011)*
- *DHSS Sexual Health Promotion: Strategy and Action Plan 2008 – 2013 December 2008*
- *Equality Commission's Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination in N Ireland March 2009*
- *Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 – revised February 2009.*

The policy is a key Safeguarding Policy and is closely linked to the Child Protection Policy. The policy upholds the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The United Kingdom Government, including Northern Ireland is a signatory to the 1989 UNCRC, meaning that all young people in Northern Ireland have a right to high quality education in accordance with the convention.

UNCRC Article 34
"*Governments must protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation".*

UNCRC Article 19
"Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents/carers *or anyone else who looks after them. "*

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding -Child Protection Policy
- Drugs Policy
- Behaviour For Learning Policy
- Period Dignity Policy
- Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- Addressing Bullying Policy

Implementation of the policy
This will take place after consultation with the Board of Governors in 2024. This policy will be reviewed by the Head teacher, Health and Wellbeing Coordinator, the Board of Governors, Staff, Parents and Students.
The next review date is June 2026.

Accessing the policy
All staff will be emailed a copy of the policy for their own use. The policy will also be available in the staff handbook with other policies.
The policy has been made available on the school website for all our school community to access.

Definition and Rationale for the Delivery of RSE
Defining RSE
RSE is about the development of the pupil's knowledge and understanding of himself/ herself as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience. RSE should give young people 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, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship.

Rationale
St Joseph's High School is an all-ability, non-selective school where each pupil is supported in the development of a personal ethos of self-improvement in a safe, secure, and supportive environment. As a Catholic school, we work together to enhance our pupils' positive attitudes and behaviours based on respect for self and others. We acknowledge the importance of our pastoral role in the welfare of all our young people. Through our mission statement and ethos, every pupil is encouraged to be the best that they can be.

We firmly recognise that all pupils have a right to an educational provision that prepares each of them for the experiences, opportunities, and responsibilities of adult life. Relationships and sexuality can present as a challenging issue for some young people. As a school, we are committed to an RSE programme which, at all times, will reflect the diversity and complexity of the lives and experiences of pupils in the school and community.

The attitude, beliefs, and behaviour of pupils in all their relationships are primarily formed and greatly influenced by their experiences within the family and the relationship they have with their parents/carers. As such we recognise that parents/carers have the primary duty and right to be the first and principal educators of their children in this area. We appreciate that an RSE programme in school, no matter how well written, resourced and taught, is greatly diminished in its effectiveness, if it does not have parental input and support at all stages.

This policy is intended to provide a framework through which our young people can develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to deal with the

challenges that they may meet in this very sensitive area. The RSE framework will provide formal opportunities for young people to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships. It should also help students to appreciate and make responsible, well-informed decisions about family life, marriage and responsible parenting within a moral, spiritual, and social framework which reflects the Catholic ethos of our school.

The Centrality of Virtue

Our programme preserves Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes those virtues which are essential in responding to God's call to love others with a proper respect for their dignity and the dignity of the human body. The following virtues will be explored and promoted: faithfulness, chastity, integrity, prudence, mercy and compassion.

Aims, objectives and skills

Our Mission Statement commits us to the education of the whole child (spiritual, physical, intellectual, moral, social, cultural, emotional) and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. Furthermore, our school aims state that we will endeavour to raise pupils' self-esteem, help them to grow in knowledge and understanding, recognise the value of all persons and develop caring and sensitive attitudes. It is in this context that we commit ourselves, in partnership with parents/carers, 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.

Aims

In line with our school ethos and CCEA guidelines, the Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme aims, in a secure learning environment, to:

- Promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects selfless love, respect and commitment within a moral, social, spiritual framework.
- Help our pupils appreciate their worth, dignity and uniqueness as children of God.
- Enable our pupils to appreciate sexuality as a gift from God.
- Promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death.
- Value the gifts of marriage and the family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience.
- Understand marriage as the sacramental sign of God's love for his Church.
- Enable our pupils to grow in holiness by acting responsibly and generously towards others.
- Value the concept and qualities of consent in relationships and understand the law in relation to consent.
- Recognise that compassion, forgiveness, mercy and tolerance are essential dispositions to develop within relationships.

- Understand that being single and chaste is a virtuous, positive and fulfilling option.
- Promote respect for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed.
- Encourage our pupils to be witness to human dignity at all times online.
- Encourage our pupils to see social media as another tool to reach people with the message that sexuality is a gift from God, not to be squandered and abused.
- Recognise common mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm and compulsive behaviours in themselves.

(Extracts from Catholic Schools Trustee Service Guidance Document for Post-Primary Schools 2021)

- To ensure that RSE enables our pupils to develop and maintain safe, healthy and satisfying personal relationships.
- To value and support school personnel involved in the planning and delivery of RSE.
- To ensure that the planning and delivery of RSE reflects the ethos and values framework of our school.

(The Fairy Godfather, FPA)

- To ensure we meet the legal requirement to teach the new additions to the RSE curriculum;
    1. Prevention of early pregnancy
    2. Access to abortion

In a safe and controlled manor while being mindful of our catholic ethos.

Objectives

In line with our school's ethos and CCEA guidelines, the Relationships and Sexuality Curriculum attempts to enable pupils to

- Realise that relationships can cause strong feelings and emotions including sexual attraction.
- Know the features of positive and stable relationships (including trust, mutual respect, honesty, equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (including imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, abuse of any kind).
- Help pupils cope with the breakdown of a relationship and the effect of change, including loss, separation, divorce and bereavement.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem.
- Acquire and develop an appropriate vocabulary to discuss feelings, sexuality and development.
- Cope with the social, physical and emotional challenges of growing up
- Be aware of the variety of ways in which individuals change or grow and develop strategies to cope with the challenges of growing up.
- Establish strategies to manage stress and anxiety and build resilience.
- Understand human physiology with reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections and diseases.
- Develop an awareness of issues relating to personal health.

- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Defer sexual activity until marriage.
- Recognise and understand the emotional, moral and social implications of sexual maturation including sexual health, conception, contraception, teenage pregnancy and childbirth within the framework of Catholic values.
- Understand and respect different family structures, and the diversity of family life.
- Recognise the need for self-control and the importance of the virtue of chastity.
- Explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality.
- Identify and understand issues relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles and stereotyping.
- Demonstrate understanding of the nature of consent and decision-making in relationships.
- Identify and avoid risk-taking behaviour.
- Recognise peer pressure and have strategies to manage it.
- Recognise the need for online safety.
- Recognise the impact of drugs and alcohol on choices and sexual behaviour.
- Be aware and critically evaluate the media portrayal of relationships which may not reflect real life and understand the possible impact of this on people's expectations of relationships.
- Help young people to become aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships and reduce people to objects for gratification.
- Interpret the implications of legislation relating to sexually explicit images, sexting and sexual activity.
- Recognise and understand the occurrence of teenage pregnancy and how to prevent it.
- Recognise and understand access to abortion.

Skills promoted

Pupils will develop the ability to:

- Form and maintain healthy, positive relationships which reflect the dignity of the human person.
- Make sound judgements and good choices.
- Manage emotions within relationships and the breakdown of relationships with sensitivity and dignity.
- Manage conflict positively and enable pupils to recognise the value of difference.
- Critically evaluate a wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values.
- Develop the communication skills of active listening, negotiation, offering and receiving constructive feedback and assertiveness.
- Cultivate mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven.

- Develop skills and strategies to respond appropriately to exploitation, bullying, harassment, and control in relationships (including the unique challenges posed by online abuse and the unacceptability of physical, emotional, sexual abuse).
- Recognise when a relationship is unhealthy or abusive (including the unacceptability of both emotional and physical abuse or violence including 'honour' based violence, forced marriage and rape).
- Be able to access support for self or others at risk.
- Develop the skills to challenge sexist, homophobic, racist and disablist language and behaviour.
- Evaluate the effect of alcohol and drug use on decision making and personal safety.
- Build resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so develop the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately.
- Develop coping strategies to overcome mental health issues and to recognise when they need to employ strategies to re-establish positive mental health including managing stress and anxiety.

Inclusion of Special Educational Needs

We will ensure RSE 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.

RSE Curriculum

The DENI Circular 2001 states that "RSE is included on a statutory basis within the curriculum through the Science programme of study and the Personal Social Health Education part of LLW." We acknowledge that important contributions in RSE come from: Home Economics, Child Development, Health and Social Care, French, Citizenship, Geography, PE, Sociology, English, English Literature, Science, LLW and Religious Education (Appendix 2). A weekly Personal and Social Education lesson is delivered to Years 8-14 by form teachers. As such, we have audited the existing RSE provision, programmes of study and policies in order to ensure a coordinated approach to curricular delivery and provision. (See Appendix 2).

RSE is taught in mixed groups, girls and boys are encouraged to work with each other and gain an understanding of each other's perspectives. However, in certain circumstances, normal mixed general classroom arrangements may be changed when it appears more appropriate to address gender specific issues to single sex groupings. Many aspects of the RSE programme are reinforced by the general school climate and everyday interactions of the classroom and the school.

Assessment of RSE
The nature of RSE is strongly orientated towards Personal Development which does not necessarily lend itself to summative assessment. RSE is not easily measurable as it is qualitative rather than quantitative. When required, RSE will be assessed and reported on in Years 8 – 14 by the Teacher who delivers the module at that level.

Use of Outside Agencies
At Saint Joseph's we encourage, were appropriate, the skills and expertise of outside agencies and professionals to be involved in our RSE delivery. Where this occurs, we will be satisfied that the contributions from informed outsiders are an integral part of the whole programme and in harmony with the aims and ethos of the school. We will ensure that all teaching is rooted in Catholic principles and practice. Parents/carers will also be given advance detailed information about the employment of these agencies.
NB; The teacher will always be present when an individual/group from an external agency is taking a group. Examples of recent outside agencies used:

- Cara-Friends (LGBTQ+ Training Workshops)
- Love for Life (Parents/carers are informed explaining the type of activities which will take place. Contact details are provided)
- Safeguarding Board NI (Chelsea's Choice/Sexual Exploitation)
- Women's Aid
- Ascert - Should I Drive workshop

♦ How will the issue of confidentiality be dealt with?
The school will ensure that the representative from the agency or other individual is clear that confidentiality cannot be maintained. The Principal or Designated Teacher must be informed of any disclosures, which might suggest that a pupil is at risk or that physical or sexual abuse is suspected.

♦ Are resources such as videos/tapes/role play appropriate?
A member of the school staff will ensure the resources which are to be used are vetted to judge the appropriateness of such materials for the age range and maturity of the pupils as well as to ensure they are compliant with the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

Parents and Carers
We believe that the responsibility for RSE is shared between parents/carers and teachers and that its effectiveness depends on a collaborative process involving parents/carers, teachers and other educational and health professionals. We recognise that each of the shareholders in the student's education has a distinctive contribution to make. Any parental concerns relating to RSE are addressed and we endeavour to resolve the issue in a positive manner which is supportive of the role of parents/carers.

Ensuring the Curriculum is balanced.
While promoting Catholic values and virtues, we will ensure that pupils are offered a balanced programme by providing an RSE programme that offers a range of viewpoints on issues. Pupils will also receive clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE relating to forced-marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality. Knowing about facts and enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints is not the same as promoting behaviour and is not incompatible with our school's promotion of Catholic teaching. We will ensure that pupils have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals and to relate to other individuals in a mature and respectful way.

Responsibility for teaching the programme
The programme will be led by our pastoral team. It will be taught by form teachers in their weekly PSE lesson as well as class teachers in their course content. Some delivery of the RSE programme will be supported by outside agencies as detailed above.

Other roles and responsibilities
Trustees
The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction, organisational nature and ethos of their respective schools. The Bishop is responsible for all Catholic schools in his Diocese as evidenced by Canon Law 806§ which states that, "The diocesan bishop has the right of supervision, visitation and inspection of Catholic schools in his diocese, even those established or directed by members of religious orders. He also has the right to issue directives concerning the general regulation of Catholic schools."

Board of Governors
Every School a Good School - The Governors' Role: A Guide for Governors outlines the role and responsibilities of Governors. Section 13.40 states, "Boards of Governors should ensure that their schools have a Relationships and Sexuality Education policy and curriculum linked to their pastoral care/child protection policy. This policy and the associated teaching should be the subject of consultation with staff and parents/carers and endorsed by the Governors." The Board of Governors should foster and support the development of an RSE policy and programme by collaborating with teachers and parents/carers. 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. At all times the governors of the school should seek to accommodate and be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents/carers while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all young people.

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. It is the role of the Vice Principals to support the work of the Principal and if a VP is charged with responsibility for RSE it is her/his responsibility to ensure that RSE is delivered in a way which is 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, parents/carers and health professionals, as appropriate.

RSE Co-ordinator
The RSE co-ordinator is a member of staff appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating all issues related to the RSE policy, the Department of Education specifications and the programme designed for the pupils. It is essential that the co-ordinator is respectful and committed to the school's ethos and the aims and direction of RSE within the school.
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 (Pastoral), all staff, parent/carers and health and educational visitors on RSE matters.
- Attending in-service training and disseminating appropriate information to other staff members.
- Liaising with outside agencies where appropriate.

Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher/Special Needs Co-ordinator
The Pastoral Team/Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator will form part of the cross-curricular team and provide relevant information which will ensure that the needs of all pupils are met. The Pastoral Team will ensure that the RSE topics delivered through Pastoral Programmes are in line with the Catholic ethos of the school. The Pastoral Team will liaise with the Designated Teacher and Special Needs Co-ordinator where necessary.

Teaching Staff
The staff provide a link through communicating the content of RSE and the relevant programme, possibly through curriculum meetings and by other means. Teachers are of central importance in terms of review of RSE provision. They are also key to identifying their own needs around ongoing professional development in their RSE work.

Chaplain
The role of the chaplain is to:

- Support the teaching of RSE where possible
- Meet with the co-ordinator to discuss the RSE programme and its delivery in school
- Witness to Gospel values.

Diocesan Advisor/Diocesan Advisor Support Service
The Diocesan Advisor supports schools in the development and delivery of an RSE policy and programme which reflects the Catholic ethos and respects the wishes of parent/carers.

Relationship to other Policies
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 our Religious Education and the following policies:

- Teaching and Learning
- Child Protection/Safeguarding Children
- Personal Development
- Anti-Bullying
- Positive Behaviour
- Drugs
- Internet Safety/E-safety
- Period Dignity

Learning about RSE in PD, HE and RE and links to other school subjects
Teachers of supporting subject areas should be informed of the content and timing of the delivery of RSE, and in so far as possible Relationships and Sexuality Education will be taught in a cross-curricular way.
The following subject areas could contribute to a cross-curricular approach:

- Child Development
- Citizenship
- English
- English Literature
- Employability
- Geography
- Health and Social Care
- Home Economics.
- Learning for Life and Work
- PSD
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Science & Technology
- Sociology

A school audit of subject content has been carried out as detailed in Appendix 2.

Responding to Pupils' Questions and Sensitive Areas
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 will set appropriate boundaries. Boundary Setting is essential to set parameters for the teaching of sensitive issues. Having an agreed Code of Conduct will ensure that the right to privacy for both student and teacher is

always respected. In terms of such a Code of Conduct our school will endeavour to;

1. Teach the fundamental principle of respect for human persons.
2. Challenge any discriminatory remarks.
3. Deal firmly with any acts of bullying, including homophobic, transphobic and cyberbullying.
4. Follow school procedures for accessing outside support for any student requiring additional help.
5. Support the parents/carers. Parents/carers may want to speak to someone at the school about one or more of these issues.
6. Arrange a meeting with the parents/carers and relevant support agencies to consider any appropriate measures of support that may be needed to ensure the needs of the student are met.
7. Follow school procedures for monitoring the well-being of student(s).
8. 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.

Our school will acknowledge the right of pupils and others to disagree with the Church's perspective, and their right to respectfully offer alternative perspectives and to engage in open and productive dialogue. However, while there may be differing perspectives on issues, the school adopting an invitational approach, will not avoid teaching what it is that the Church professes.

While teaching RSE, teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the pupils, the RSE curriculum and the RSE policy for the school. Any advice provided and the way teachers respond should support the role of the pupils' parents/carers or carers and reflect the ethos of the school. All staff teaching RSE related issues should use the proper biological names for body parts and sexual acts where appropriate and relevant to the RSE programme. The use of common slang should be avoided. Teachers should remember that as they are not medical professionals, they must not give personal medical advice to any pupil. Teachers will advise pupils to seek advice from parents/carers and/or health professionals. If any question asked raises child protection issues, this should be referred to the designated teacher for child protection.

Specific Issues

The Status of the Family
In keeping with the right of Catholic schools to present RSE within its own ethos, the school supports the Sacramental vision of marriage and family, while being sensitive to other family situations. The Catholic understanding of marriage will be presented and sexual intimacy will be taught in the context of a God-given gift that enables married men and women to express and deepen their love for each other, a love that should unite the couple as well being open to the gift of new life. The Church's teaching on Sacramental Marriage as a permanent, exclusive union between one man and one woman open to the transmission of new life will be presented as the Catholic understanding of the context for sexual intimacy.

The Virtue of Chastity
In line with the ethos of the school and Christian morals, sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within it, will be presented as a positive, desirable and achievable option. The ideal context for sexual intimacy is a committed, permanent heterosexual relationship between a man and a woman.

The Sanctity of Life
In keeping with the right of Catholic schools to present RSE within its own ethos, the value and sacredness of life will be actively promoted. From the moment of conception, the embryo is a human being and must be recognised as having the rights of a person. The most fundamental right for every human being is the right to life. This belief is one of the foundation stones on which the RSE programme is built. Life is sacred from conception to the moment of natural death.

Family Planning
In Familiaris Consortio (1981:14) Pope John Paul II spoke of God's plan when he said that marriage is 'the foundation of the wider community of the family,' and that the 'institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children.' In accordance with this, Catholic teaching places sexual intercourse within the Sacrament of Marriage and the use of any artificial means of preventing procreation is not acceptable. Catholic teaching on family planning will be presented and pupils will also be provided with accurate information about methods of artificial contraception in an age appropriate and sensitive manner.

Sexually Transmitted Infections
It is important that pupils are provided with accurate information about sexually transmitted infections, the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, practical hygiene and the inherent dangers of risk-taking behaviour and how to obtain appropriate advice if they are concerned about their sexual health. Information on how to prevent the spread of infections should take note of the fact that the best way to prevent infection is to practice sexual abstinence before marriage and monogamy (inside marriage).

Teenage Pregnancy
In the event of a student informing a teacher that she is or may be pregnant the teacher must refer the pupil to the Designated Teacher who will follow Child Protection guidelines.

Sexual Orientation
In accordance with the Catholic ethos of our school, we uphold the Church's teaching that the meaning and purpose of sexual intimacy is fully realized in the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, faithful to one another for life and open to the possibility of transmission of new life, while recognizing and respecting the different views of others. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favourably or isolated in any way on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Antagonism/bullying or other forms of abuse against pupils who reveal that they are homosexual will not be tolerated by the school. Respect for all people, regardless of sexual orientation, will be promoted in line with the school ethos. Pupils have the right to hold different views/lifestyles in a peaceful manner. The Catholic ethos of the school ensures that gospel values, inclusivity, equality and respect for all and the right of everyone to learn in a safe and secure environment where all are treated with respect and dignity.

The ethos of a Catholic school supports the guidance produced by the Equality Commission on eliminating sexual orientation discrimination. This guidance relates to the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and the guidance from the Equality Commission (NI) in March 2009.

Bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation is as unacceptable as it is in any other situation where someone is mistreated or bullied because of their differences from those who are perceived to be the majority. All issues relating to bullying on the grounds of sexual orientation will be dealt with appropriately in line with the school's anti-bullying policy.

Pastoral Care of Young People with Gender Dysphoria
The disclosure of gender dysphoria by a child or young person is first and foremost a pastoral and welfare issue. As such, the priority of the school is to create a safe environment in which the vulnerable child can receive the support that they require.

Digital Safety
The RSE Programme will teach pupils how to safely navigate the digital world. Technology plays an integral role in the lives of pupils which poses both opportunities and risks. The RSE Programme will raise awareness of potential threats or dangers posed by the Internet such as sexting, cyber-bullying, pornography, abuse and exploitation. Pupils will explore the implications of the law, the strategies they can use to protect themselves and where they can access advice and support if they are at risk.

Supporting Young People and Children at risk

We will endeavour to ensure our pupils feel safe and secure in the environment in which RSE takes place. Effective RSE will provide opportunities for discussion of what is and is not appropriate in relationships. Such discussion may, at times, lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. Teachers should be aware of the needs of their pupils and not let any fears and worries go unnoticed. Where a teacher suspects that a child or young person is a victim of or is at risk of abuse, they are required to follow the school's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the designated senior member of staff responsible.

While pupils should not be encouraged to disclose personal or private information in RSE classes, there may be times when they do talk about their own lives. Our school recognises that pupils need and expect a certain level of confidentiality, and every effort is made to ensure that this is provided as and when appropriate. However, it is essential that at all times confidentiality operates within the boundaries of the School's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy and the Children's (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The School has a responsibility for the welfare and safety of all pupils within the School environment and thus it is not always possible to offer confidentiality.
All teaching staff must follow these procedures:

- Confidentiality must be discussed with the pupils before the RSE programme commences.
- Ground rules should be agreed with the pupils.
- Pupils should be informed that there are instances when confidentiality cannot be held (for example, in cases of suspected abuse). Pupils should be informed fully of the action that will be taken.
- Pupils must be fully aware that they have the right to report inappropriate attitudes and/or behaviour by any member of the School personnel.
- Where teachers are unsure of their obligations in relation to confidentiality, they should in the first instance consult with the Designated Teacher, Mr S Murray (Pastoral Vice Principal).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The RSE Policy is reviewed and updated biannually. Consultation takes place on the relevance and effectiveness of the course and any suggested improvements considered. Staff, parents and pupils are involved in the monitoring and evaluation process.

Training provision

This is organised in consultation with the Principal, SMT, Public Health Agency, EA Advisors or the Diocesan Advisors as appropriate.
Previous Staff Training includes CRED training from the Rainbow Group on LGBTQ+ Awareness. The Sexual Health Training Team of Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, supported by the Public Health Agency and DENI are commissioned to facilitate this.

Withdrawal from RSE

The NI Curriculum Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance 2015 states that, 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. Therefore, whilst 'there is no legislative provision permitting parental withdrawal from sex education', schools can grant these requests on an individual basis.

Any parental concerns relating to RSE are addressed and we endeavour to resolve the issue in a positive manner which is supportive of the role of parents/carers.

If a parent/carer still requests that their child is excused from participating in some or all of the RSE lessons we discuss the nature of the parent/carers 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 or GCSE syllabuses 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. The parent/carers wish should, however, be respected.

Appendix 1

Support Resources

CCEA Resources
Available at www.ccea.org.uk

RSE Hub
The RSE Hub provides a range of up-to-date, relevant resources and sources of support for priority areas in RSE. These resources and guidance documents can be used to help address sensitive issues with pupils. However, the resources should be reviewed prior to use to ensure they are appropriate for pupils and in line with the ethos and RSE policy of the School.

Wellbeing Hub
The Wellbeing Hub identifies how the Northern Ireland curriculum promotes the learning and development of skills that support pupils' wellbeing and mental health.

UNCRC Resource Hub
CCEA and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People have partnered to create resources for teachers and pupils with a focus on the rights of children and young people, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Teaching Controversial Issues A training programme which supports a whole-school approach to teaching controversial issues. Training materials can be adapted for use within the School.

Controversial Issues Guidance
Guidance to support Principals, senior leaders and teachers plan and develop approaches to teaching controversial issues at whole-school and classroom levels.

CCEA guidance documents
The following guidance documents, produced by CCEA, may be of use to teachers in planning RSE provision:
- InSync - teaching resource for Key Stage 3 Personal Development issues
- Learning for Life and Work at Key Stage 4
- Active Learning and Teaching Methods at Key Stage 3
- Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities at Key Stage 3
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment at Key Stage 4 12

Department of Education Resources
Available at www.education-ni.gov.uk

iMatter
A series of support leaflets relating to pupil health and wellbeing.