

St Benedict's Catholic High School

Human Relationships and Sex Education Policy



Headteacher: Emma Jackson
Chair of Governors: John McQuirk
Link Governor: Father Richard Simons
Date of ratification: 25th March 2021
Date of review: April 2023

Introduction

St Benedict's Catholic High School has adopted the Diocese of Lancaster's model policy as the central structure for this policy. The policy sets out St Benedict's Catholic High School's approach to Human Relationships and Sex Education and its place within the mission vision and values of our School.

Vision and Mission

As a Catholic School, Christ is at the centre of everything we do. Our values, including honesty, integrity, justice, charity, dignity and compassion are rooted in our Catholic faith. We also recognise that our pupils need to develop resilience, responsibility, flexibility, and a willingness to operate as part of a team.

We pride ourselves on making a big difference to young people's lives. Everything we do, we do with our pupils at the heart of it. Our mission is simple, to ensure that every one of our pupils leaves us equipped with the necessary skills, qualifications and mind-set to take the next steps in leading a deeply rewarding life. We endeavour to nurture the caring, trusting and positive relationships between pupils, staff, parents and carers and we make a promise to all pupils that they will be safe and happy here.

Vision for Human Relationships and Sex Education

At St Benedict's Catholic High School we are inspired by Jesus to be the very best we can be. We look after one another and show respect and love through our relationships with one another. Jesus is invited into our hearts. In the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to lead a full life with him by explaining what makes people blessed or happy. This is about understanding how loving our neighbour enables us to be happy too. Therefore, having a good relationship with ourselves and the other people in our lives makes us grow and flourish and we respect that everyone is a unique and beautiful part of God's creation. We are all children of God, called to grow in love for him through the person of Jesus Christ and to spread the Good News through the action of the Holy Spirit.

Procedures

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

- Staff
- Governing Body
- Parents/ Carers
- School Council
- Diocesan Education Service
- the wider community

There has been a curriculum audit involving all the middle leaders of the school to verify the programme of study and confirm that the curriculum planning is robust. The HRSE group will review the audit findings, identify any inconsistencies or gaps and ensure the curriculum is fit for purpose. It will be presented to staff following further stakeholder consultation, alongside the appropriate training, for implementation by September 2021.

In consultation with the Governing Body, this policy will be implemented from Easter 2021 and reviewed every two years, by the Headteacher, the SLT leader for HRSE, the Governing Body, student council and school staff. The next review date is April 2023.

The school website will contain a statement about HRSE teaching and details of where to obtain a full copy of the policy upon request. The page covers the statutory elements of relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education that are not covered in HRSE, though the whole intent of the school curriculum is drawn from its Catholic character. The Education Service will be sent a copy of the school's HRSE policy and it is the duty of the Governing Body to ensure that this is up to date.

Rationale

As an 11 – 18 secondary school in the Diocese of Lancaster Education Service, we use the term Human Relationships and Sex Education (HRSE) as it believes that relationships education is about all aspects of growing a fulfilled and happy life, sexual education is a dimension of this greater whole.

The defining belief of Christianity is that God took on human form. This endows the human form with an extraordinary dignity that goes beyond that of all other forms of life and shows that humanity alone can embrace this relationship with God. Therefore, our relationship with our own bodies is not casual but infused with the Holy Spirit. Any teaching about love and sexual relationships in school must be rooted in this belief which is expressed in the Church's teaching about relationships, marriage, sex and family life. The Church offers education to young people as it is part of complete human formation. Education about human love is no less a part of a Catholic school's responsibility than teaching about mathematics or English. At St Benedict's Catholic High School, we teach young people about how to form relationships, including understanding loving relationships and acknowledging that children's first experience of love is in the home. We encourage children from the earliest age to recognise that they are all children of God and that each person shares a God given dignity. As children mature, we encourage them to follow the example of Jesus and live lives inspired by the Gospel virtues, enabling them to follow His commandment to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31). This is the basis for all relationships in our school. Teaching about relationships in our schools is supported by Christian virtue teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in line with 'Fit for Mission? Schools'.

The Diocese recognises the value of these curriculum aims. However, Catholic schools also have regard for the spiritual welfare of the pupils and recognises that to know and love God brings lasting happiness.

The Department for Education in 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2019) states that

"To embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their well-being, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. Pupils can also put this knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts. Everyone faces difficult situations in their lives. These subjects can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support."

Statutory framework

The statutory framework replaces Statutory Guidance: 'Sex and Relationships Education Guidance' (2000). The DfE states that it intends to update the guidance every three years. The statutory guidance is available from the DfE (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>). It should be read in conjunction with this Diocesan guidance and the documents in Appendix 1.

Purpose of the Statutory Guidance

The guidance intends to help children and young people develop. The knowledge and attributes they gain will support their own, and others', wellbeing and attainment and help young people to become successful and happy adults who make a meaningful contribution to society. The Diocese of Lancaster agrees with these aims and seeks to support them through the appropriate development of the HRSE provision. The table summarises statutory obligations.

Relationships Education	Relationships and Sex Education	Health Education
All schools providing primary education, including all-through schools and middle schools (includes schools as set out in the Summary section).	All schools providing secondary education, including all-through schools and middle schools	All maintained schools including schools with a sixth form, academies, free schools, non-maintained special schools and alternative provision, including pupil referral units.

Requirements of the Diocese of Lancaster

The Bishop of Lancaster requires that all schools within the Diocese have a policy in line with Section 48 inspection requirements. (The term sex and relationships should be replaced in policies with human relationships and sex education.)

The key points within this guidance are as follows:

1. All schools must have an up-to-date HRSE policy that may incorporate Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education policy drawn up by the Governing Body, and available to parents and for inspection.
2. This should be developed in consultation with parents and the wider community.
3. Secondary schools should have clear parameters on what pupils should know when they leave school and be prepared for further education.
4. All schools' policies must include how they will teach Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

Virtues and Values

Gospel virtues and values underpin the HRSE curriculum. The Christian tradition describes behaviours or habits that lead to happiness, human flourishing and a closer relationship with God as virtues. These virtues are described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and fall into two groups. The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity are about developing the habits of being open to the work of the Holy Spirit and developing a deeper relationship with God through living a balanced and happy, good life. The cardinal virtues of practical wisdom (prudence), justice, fortitude and temperance help people develop habits of reason, fairness, emotional resilience and self-mastery. They are human virtues and, as such, are part of the development of people of all faiths or none as they learn how to flourish, thrive and to have a life supported by strong and caring relationships. The cardinal virtues are drawn from the teachings of Plato and Aristotle and are held in common with people of many faiths and secular beliefs. St. Thomas Aquinas attributes the theological virtues as having their foundation in God, they complete the cardinal virtues and are the way people can reach "the abundant life" (John 10:10).

At St Benedict's Catholic High School we live out Gospel values that are inspired by the life, words and actions of Jesus Christ. These values underpin all that we are and all that we represent, especially when forging, nurturing and sustaining healthy relationship. The Gospel values guide us in our daily lives and help shape both our practices and policies, but more importantly, they help both staff and pupils to authentically encounter God in their daily lives.

All members of our school community are expected to uphold our core principles both within school and outside of the school setting. Gospel values and principles should not be restricted to the walls of a school. How is a person expected to develop themselves academically, morally and spiritually if the promotion and nurturing of these things isn't continued after school? As a Catholic School we model tolerance, respect, forgiveness and do all that we can to support our pupils and help them grow to become intentional disciples committed to furthering the message of Christ with the skills developed within the school setting.

We pride ourselves on the high expectations we have for our pupils, both academically and concerning behavioral management. We are passionate about rewarding pupils for positive behaviour and where expectations are not met we use restorative practice to achieve reconciliation. Through the curriculum and engagement in ministry, our pupils are able to reflect on the behaviours and attitudes of themselves and those around them. We also provide regular opportunities for pupils to put their faith into action, both within and beyond our school.

Further details can be found on the school's website at:

[Policies – St. Benedict's School \(st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk\)](http://st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk)

Every day begins with prayer and pupils are encouraged to pray throughout the day, be that throughout their day in the silence of their own hearts, or within our Chapel during activities. Prayer is a time for all members of our community to take a step back and just be still, comfortable in God's embrace.

The Aim and Objectives of HRSE

The aim of HRSE is part of our aim to educate the complete human person. This is expressed in *Fit for mission? Schools* (2009).

The fundamental needs of the human person are the focus of Catholic education – intellectual, physical, emotional, social, spiritual and eschatological (Our eternal destiny). These fundamental needs can only be truly fulfilled through a rich and living encounter with the deepest truths about God and the human person.

This is why Christ and His Gospel must be the foundation of the educational project of each school and college, because He is 'the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection' (Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*). Therefore, the Catholic school or college is called to keep the Gospel whole and alive amongst pupils, families and staff.

HRSE will deepen the following areas of understanding:

- To develop self respect and love of self.
- To invite young people to develop and deepen a loving relationship with God.
- To invite young people to understand that their life has a purpose.
- To invite young people to develop and deepen relationships with each other. based on mutual respect and care and to understand this can be an expression of God's love.
- To foster an understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church about how to live a

full life, a life of virtue, and the place of human sexuality in living a full life, Holy Matrimony and parenthood.

- A strong awareness of their own safety and the nature of consent.
- To have an understanding of the law in England about Equality and Marriage, appropriate to age and maturity.

Through the delivery of HRSE we will develop attitudes, personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding through:

- We will seek to develop attitudes of awe and wonder for the gift and beauty of self, respect for each other as children of God and rejoice in the goodness of God's creation.
- We will foster an atmosphere in school which celebrates the work of the Trinity through the life of the school and its relationship with the Church.
- We will teach children about the beauty of the Church's teaching about love and God's love for them which is shared in the Sacraments.
- We will sensitively share the Church's teaching about the importance of marriage and family life as a way to live in loving relationships with others and with God.
- We will seek to develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity in all.
- We will seek to enable pupils to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.
- We will encourage pupils to learn about expressing their own emotions and being respectful of the emotions and behaviours of others.
- We will encourage the whole school to be like a loving family recognising God as a merciful and generous father as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer.
- We will encourage everyone in the school to recognise their part in the school family and work together for reconciliation when relationships in the school falter.
- We will encourage everyone in the school to value humility, mercy and compassion and to respond with empathy to the problems of others.
- We will develop pupils' knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for managing their own risk.
- We will develop pupils' experience of what it is to be truly happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and gratification, satisfying the spirit rather than the senses.
- We will teach them the virtue of patience.
- We will teach pupils about the media and their choices, about what to watch, what games to play, what rules apply, especially when using social media, and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.
- We will encourage pupils to develop their own moral framework about accessing information online.
- We will encourage pupils to recognise the influence of peer pressure and the moral integrity required to say "no".
- We will support pupils when relationships in their lives are challenging and teach them that there are people in school who will listen if they are experiencing changes that make them frightened or uncomfortable.
- We will teach pupils about legally protected characteristics and their duty to respect difference.
- We will teach pupils about the damage that drugs and alcohol can do to relationships with the self, as well as others.
- We will teach young people that God is merciful and always waiting for us to be reconciled with him.
- We will encourage our pupils to discern what their vocation is and what God is calling them to do with the skills that have been granted to them.
- We will help pupils understand the role of the Holy Spirit on earth and in our lives and the divine gifts that He shares with us through authentic encounters with Him.

- We will ensure pupils learn and understand the core prayers that underpin our faith including the Our Father, the Glory Be, the Hail Mary and the Apostles Creed.
- We will encourage pupils to understand the significant contributions made by Saint Benedict throughout history and how to apply the lessons learnt from those contributions to their own lives today.

Inclusion

At St Benedict's Catholic High School we identify that young people mature in different ways. Our teaching about relationships and sexuality is respectful of each child's starting point, their faith, culture and sexual orientation. Lessons are framed by this understanding and young people encouraged to respect difference and develop an approach of dialogue.

Pupils requiring or requesting additional support will be treated with dignity and respect and offered support through our pastoral system, school nurse, our Chaplain and through seeking help from other appropriate agencies.

Equality

The Governing Body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that St Benedict's Catholic High School's endeavours to do its best for all of the pupils, irrespective of ability (physical and mental), race, ethnicity, nationality, maternity, pregnancy, gender or sexual orientation or whether they are looked after children.

Further details can be found on the school's website at:

[Policies – St. Benedict's School \(st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk\)](http://st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk) in the separate Single Equality Scheme document.

Programme of study

The Diocese of Lancaster has a programme of study prepared to support our family of schools. It covers from ages 2 – 19 years. The Department for Education has prepared a statutory programme for 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' which is a compulsory requirement from September 2020.

The intent of the programme of study is to encourage young people to recognise their interior beauty, their dignity as a human and through this to understand and value the worth of others. This builds on the experience of the home where, as children, so many of us experience our first expressions of love and form our early relationships.

"We must wonder! We must create an environment of wonder! We must create a climate of wonder! This task is closest to the family... Wonder is needed so that beauty might enter into human life, into society and the nation... We need to marvel at everything that is found in man." Pope St. John Paul II

At St Benedict's Catholic High School, HRSE is taught in RE, RS, Science, PE and Health and Social Care. Some aspects are taught in tutor time and through assemblies. A wide range of teaching strategies are used, and clear ground rules for discussions are established. Staff will receive training in the delivery of HRSE.

Parents will be kept informed on the school's website as to how HRSE is delivered at St Benedict's and lessons take account of the child protection and safeguarding policy which can be found on the website at: [Policies – St. Benedict's School \(st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk\)](http://st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk)

Progress and understanding is monitored through regular assessment in RE and science. Well-being is monitored through the pastoral system and by tracking pupils' outcomes.

Parents

The Church recognises parents as the first educators of their children. The school should support parents in this task. The role of the school should be that of assisting and completing the work of parents, furnishing children and adolescents with an evaluation of “*sexuality as value and task of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God*”. (Educational Guidance in Human Love (1983) Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education n69) Children’s first experience of relationships and love are in the home. At our schools we seek to work with parents and support them as their children grow and begin to develop their own character as well as experiencing changes in their physical appearance. Parents have been consulted about this policy before being ratified by the Governing Body.

The school will involve and support parents in learning about HRSE by sharing an overview of the curriculum on the website. We will notify parents / carers when visitors are coming to school using Edulink or when a sensitive subject is to be taught.

Right to be excused from Sex Education

Information about HRSE programme and this policy will be available on the school website, referred to in the school newsletter and made available at Year 6 transition evening. Parents / carers are thus made aware of their right to withdraw their child from HRSE lessons, though they are not able to withdraw them from statutory science lessons. They should contact the Pastoral Lead for Transition if their child is in Year 6, or the Senior Leader with responsibility for RHSE. Parents / carers considering this will be asked to a discussion with the Headteacher around the benefits of receiving this education, the purpose of the curriculum in a Catholic context and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. A discussion will follow involving the child to ensure their wishes are understood. Following discussions, except in exceptional circumstances, the school will respect the parents’ request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. This will be recorded by the Senior Leader with responsibility for RHSE. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school will make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms

Teaching HRSE

The Senior Leader for Personal Development is responsible for the co-ordination, monitoring and line management of HRSE. Elements of HRSE are delivered in RE lesson, science lessons, PE and Computing lessons and in tutor time. This will be supported by the school nurse. Careers guidance is delivered in Tutor Time and throughout the curriculum in all key stages.

All staff are involved in fostering attitudes, living Gospel virtues and shaping behaviour base on a Christian Understanding of how to lead a good life. Staff are called to be role models of the school’s ethos in their relationships with other staff members, their conduct towards parents and their care for the children in the school. Staff who are not Catholic themselves must conduct their behaviour in school in accordance with the vision and mission of the school.

Dealing with Difficult Questions

The Governing Body desires that HRSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where pupils experience a growing appreciation for wellbeing, and that of others, and a deeper understanding that the Church teaches a path of the wholeness of mind, body and spirit. Part of this is creating an atmosphere where questions can be asked openly, knowing that their questions will be answered and understanding that staff or other pupils will not judge these questions. It is vital; therefore, that teachers invest time in creating this framework of mutual trust and care while respecting personal information. The HRSE coordinator must be given access to training and support to facilitate teachers to enable such discussions by creating carefully negotiated ground

rules and distancing strategies. The Department for Education (2000) offers the following guidelines for dealing with questions:

Teachers should establish clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole-class setting. Many teachers are concerned about responding to unexpected questions or comments from pupils in a whole-class situation. Having a set of ground rules should reduce the chances of this happening, but teachers will need support and training so that they prepare for the unexpected. For example:

- If a question is too personal, the teacher should remind the pupil of the ground rules. If the pupil needs further support, the teacher can refer her or him to the appropriate person, such as a school counsellor, school nurse, helpline, or an outside agency or service;
- If a teacher doesn't know the answer to a question, it is essential to acknowledge this, and to suggest that the pupil or teacher or both together research the subject later;
- If a problem is too explicit, feels too old for a pupil, is inappropriate for the whole class, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should acknowledge it and promise to attend to it later on an individual basis. In this way, the pupil will feel they have received respectful treatment, but the rest of the class will not have to listen to personal experience or inappropriate information. To maintain trust and respect the teacher must remember to talk with the pupil later; and
- If a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of sexual abuse, they should follow the school's child protection procedures.

Sensitive subjects in HRSE always need to be framed so that the young people who are participating know that there is pastoral support if any of the issues discussed make them feel the need to talk further or share confidential information. The safeguarding framework of the school should frame this, and it is paramount that all staff teaching HRSE have up to date safeguarding professional development.

Questions asked by pupils that are a cause for concern for the teacher, for example, because of their explicit or graphic content, should be addressed following the school's safeguarding policy and confidentiality procedures. This can be found on the school's website at:

[Policies – St. Benedict's School \(st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk\)](http://st-benedicts.cumbria.sch.uk)

The school will ensure that this policy is available for all staff, governors, parents and pupils on the school website and how to obtain advice and guidance in confidence as a result of any issues or questions that may arise.

Pupils are encouraged to talk to their parents or carers about issues and questions that arise as part of the programme. It will be made clear to all that unconditional confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where illegal or abusive concerns come to light, and these will be dealt with under the school safeguarding policy.

Appendix 1:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (statutory guidance)
- [Respectful School Communities: Self Review and Signposting Tool](#) (a tool to support a whole school approach that promotes respect and discipline)
- [Behaviour and Discipline in Schools](#) (advice for schools, including advice for appropriate behaviour between pupils)
- [Equality Act 2010 and schools](#)
- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#) (statutory guidance)
- [Alternative Provision](#) (statutory guidance)
- [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools](#) (advice for schools)
- [Preventing and Tackling Bullying](#) (advice for schools, including advice on [cyberbullying](#))
- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools](#) (advice for schools)
- [The Equality and Human Rights Commission Advice and Guidance](#) (provides advice on avoiding discrimination in a variety of educational contexts)
- [Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools](#) (guidance for maintained schools on promoting basic important British values as part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC))
- [SMSC requirements for independent schools](#) (guidance for independent schools on how they should support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development).
- [National Citizen Service](#) guidance for schools

The Process:

- 12.11.20 Teams meeting between the staff working group to identify the scope and review the model documents. (Science, Biology, RE, PE Health and Social Care, School Chaplain, SLT)
- Working group members work on assigned areas to modify and personalise the policy.
- 25.11.20 Middle Leader Curriculum audit begins
- 10.12.21 Draft policy issued by email and comments received and addressed.
- 15.1.21 Updated policy issued to staff group and further comments received and addressed.
- 3.2.21 Policy emailed for review to Father Richard Simons. Comments received and addressed.
- 9.2.21 Curriculum 'gaps' circulated to middle leader for consideration.
- 9.2.21 Parents and pupils on the school council provided with the draft policy for comment.
- 23.2.21 Comments received and policy updated.
- 24.2.21 Policy submitted to the Diocese Education Office for further review.
- 9.3.21 Comments received and policy updated.
- 20.3.21 Curriculum map updated.