



## ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Policy for Education in Human Love

**Person Responsible: Miss M. Jackson**

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#### Introduction

In St. Mary's School teaching or formation on human love or human development is within the whole context of our faith in God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ. It is through our love of God and of neighbour that we reciprocate that love. For many Christians this happens through the love between man and woman. Marriage is the school in which many Christians can meet Christ through the adventure of learning to love one another. It is the consistent teaching of the Church through the centuries that it is only in the context of marriage that sexual love can take on its true meaning. Marriage is a mutual commitment of total fidelity which is open to the gift of life. In the culture in which we live it is vital that our pupils understand the importance of commitment for life. It is only through commitment that the deepest lessons of love can be learnt.

It is also within this general framework of commitment to love that the whole idea of vocation should be presented. All our young pupils are called to some particular vocation in the Church. They all have their unique gifts and are called to occupy a particular place within God's plan. This is their dignity as sons and daughters of God. It is within that perspective that all vocation should be seen, whether to marriage, priesthood, religious life, other forms of consecrated life, or to the single state. This message is especially important in our culture which is inhospitable to the idea of absolute commitment. As Christians we recognise in joy that God has given himself to us completely in love and we respond to that love with the whole of our lives.

## Overview

### 1. Church Teaching

All Sex and Relationship Education provided by St. Mary's must be in accordance with Catholic teaching. On all questions relating to faith and morals, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is normative. The following is a brief summary from the *Catechism*:

“God created man and woman in his own image, with equal dignity, different yet complementary. Our sexuality is a gift from God, and must be expressed according to his will of love. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we are one body with Christ. Chastity should be presented in a positive way: it is a gift from God, leading to a self-control which frees us to behave towards ourselves and others with love and with justice. God’s holy gift of sexual intercourse is reserved for the permanent commitment of marriage, expressive of the bond of mutual love and open to God’s gift of new life.” (para 2331-2400, 2514-2533.) “Genuine love is the fundamental vocation of every human being.” (para 2392.)

The document from the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love* states:

“Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love. Therefore it is an integral part of the development of the personality and of the educative process.” “Sex education is not reducible to simple teaching material, nor theoretical knowledge alone, nor does it consist of a programme to be carried out progressively, but it has a specific object in view: an effective maturation of pupils’ self-control and of correct behaviour in special relationships.” (SCCE, 1983.)

This document identifies the primary duty of parents to educate their children in matters of human love and the auxiliary but essential duty of the school to co-operate and provide what is best done in the school context.

Further clarification of the subsidiarity of schools to the primary rights and duties of parents is outlined in the document produced by the Pontifical Council for the Family (1995), *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*. This document is highly recommended to parents since it is they who are the prime educators of their children. The document emphasises Gospel values and draws on the insights of science taking into account contemporary social and cultural conditions of family

life. It indicates how negative and selfish values concerning human sexuality can be effectively overcome when parents and schools co-operate to foster a genuine appreciation of the values of chastity, self-control and authentic human love which always puts the needs of others before self.

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales publication, *Cherishing Life*, gives a Catholic perspective on fundamental issues relating to the moral and spiritual well-being of the human person in society, especially with reference to the value and protection of human life. It contains a section on the Church's teaching on sexuality.

In their statement from the Low Week Conference of 1987 the Bishops of England and Wales wrote:

“...We must protect our children from ignorance and they should be given all the necessary information, and correct answers to their questions. Within the Christian community there is a real need for giving gradual and positive sex education to our children. Each school, in consultation with governors, teachers and parents, should have or build a developmental programme which aims to help our young people to have a properly formed conscience, to enable them to make right judgements, and to take right actions in the many and varied situations in which they may find themselves.”

## **2. Statutory Requirements for the school curriculum**

Statutory requirements for Sex and Relationship Education are set out in the 1986 and 1993 Education Acts, with further references in the Education Act 1996. The most recent guidance on this is the DfEE Guidance 0116/2000, *Sex and Relationship Education Guidance*, which replaces Circular 5/94 and takes account of the revised National Curriculum, the new Personal, Social and Health Education framework and the Social Exclusion Unit report on teenage pregnancy.

The DfE 0116/2000 guidance is underpinned by the *Learning and Skills Act 2000*, which gives governors and headteachers a statutory responsibility to have regard to the guidance in ensuring that young people are taught the importance of marriage and that they are protected from inappropriate teaching materials.

Education for personal relationships is statutory in the Foundation Stage where the first of the Areas of Learning is Personal, Social and Emotional Development. In Key Stages 1 and 2 National Curriculum Guidance for Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship are non-statutory but St. Mary's has a programme which ensures continuity and progression through the primary years. We have a cross-curricular approach to planning. The legal requirements for the Science curriculum for Key Stages 1 and 2 include teaching about a number of areas which should be linked with the Church teaching on respect for life:

- By the end of Key Stage 1 children are expected to understand that human beings move, feed, grow, use their senses and reproduce; to be able to recognise and compare the main external parts of the bodies of human beings; to know that human beings can have children and these grow into adults; to be able to recognise similarities and differences between themselves and others and treat others with sensitivity.
- By the end of Key Stage 2 children are expected to know that the life processes common to humans and other animals include nutrition, growth and reproduction, and to understand the main stages of the human life cycle.

At St. Mary's parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from all or part of any sex education provided, except the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction required under National Curriculum science.

Sex and Relationship Education is taught in our school, so that pupils will be able to learn about the Church's teaching on all these areas and encouraged to develop healthy attitudes and an understanding of the essential goodness and holiness of God's creation.

### **3. Parental Rights**

St. Mary's follow the *'Journey of Love'* programme throughout the school, which was discussed and approved by staff and governors. The policy is available on the website for parents to view. If parents have any queries about the policy or scheme they can contact the school for discussion. On entry to the school, parents are made aware of the Programme of Study regarding Sex and Relationship Education at St. Mary's and how this is intrinsic to Catholic Education. Our prospectus includes information about the programme.

### **4. The Wider Context of Sex and Relationship Education in St. Mary's**

Sex education is taught within the context of relationships and within the wider context of the whole curriculum of our school with its moral and spiritual foundations. Education in sexuality is 'cross-curricular'. All subjects have a role to play and all members of the school community, by virtue of the relationships they foster within St. Mary's, contribute to education in sexuality.

### **5. Delivery of Sex and Relationship Education**

In St. Mary's we follow the programme *Journey in Love* so that a developmental and holistic approach is adopted. This is tailored to a young child's increasing personal awareness and understanding of his or her own growth and development through all areas of learning and National Curriculum subjects. As in all teaching and learning, teachers' planning is differentiated to take account of the range of abilities, understanding and developmental needs of the children in their care.

Young children have a matter of fact attitude to life in general, to themselves and to their bodies. This natural and therefore God-given interest and curiosity about their lives and who they are should be directed to an understanding in faith of their own beginnings, growth and development within their family of origin.

Before the likely onset of puberty, children should know and be able to use correct biological language to describe parts of the body and its functions. Because of the natural development of the child at this age, this can be done without embarrassment or undue interest.

In Year 6, children will be able to review and consolidate their previous learning before transfer to secondary school through a deepening of their understanding of their developing roles and responsibilities in family and community life. This will ensure a sound foundation both psychologically and spiritually for later Sex and Relationship Education as responsible young Catholic adults.

There may be occasions when it is judged helpful for speakers from agencies or authorities outside the school to speak or work with pupils on matters concerning sex education. In such circumstances, the school should ensure that the speaker is fully aware of Catholic teaching in the matters to be presented and does not give any personal views which conflict with this. A member of staff should be present when outside speakers are working with pupils.

As in all other areas of the curriculum, St. Marys' staff receive in-service training. As with all teaching, teachers recognise the realities of their pupils' experience, especially as many children and young people are not familiar with marriage as a stable and committed relationship. Staff feel comfortable in dealing with sensitive issues, and they know that they have the full support of senior management and governors when complying with school policy.

Since the Sex and Relationship Education Policy in a school is a governors' policy, our governors receive a report on the sex education provided and the policy is reviewed accordingly.

## Useful Sources and References

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## **Government**

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