



**Human Relationships and Sex
Education Policy
Our Lady's Catholic College
2020
(reviewed August 2023)**

1. Introduction

As a Catholic school it is fundamental that we reflect the Gospel teachings in our ethos and that we do all we can to embrace the uniqueness and individuality of each pupil who we believe to be made in the image and likeness of God.

We believe that home is the first place our young children will be introduced to the teachings of Jesus and the word of God. In situations where this may not be the case we believe it is our responsibility as a Catholic school to ensure the teachings of the Church are made explicit and children are able to make informed decisions on things that will significantly impact their lives.

This policy will outline how we aim to provide a holistic education for our pupils to develop personal and social skills and increase the knowledge and understanding of each young person as they grow about their relationships and well-being.

2. Vision and Mission

Live, Love, Learn in a Caring Catholic Community

Vision for Human Relationships and Sex Education

At Our Lady's Catholic College 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.

This vision for our school is especially important for our Human Relationships and Sex Education. In helping our young people to grow in wisdom we encourage them to make life enhancing decisions that will positively impact on all the relationships they make. These decisions are what enable us, as humans, to be truly happy, a happiness that is sustained and is not based on ephemeral pleasures.

We aim to help them develop a sense of awe and wonder which will enable our young people to grow as they have numinous experiences that deepen their relationship with God and so deepen their spirituality. Treating all with God-given dignity will raise our young people's self-worth, which in our current age can often be so low. We endeavor to teach our young people that they are made in God's image and so are special and unique, which will help them to grow in confidence and appreciate their God-given gifts and talents. In recognizing their own dignity they will be able to appreciate that of others and so enables them to enter into loving relationships that will bring them true happiness. Our sexuality is part of our total self-gift of the heart and we seek to bring the young people in our care to know the beauty, goodness and truth of the Church's teaching about how to lead a fulfilled life as they grow and change from children into young adults.

Lastly, we endeavor to call our young people into a life of love with Christ. As children of God grow in love for him, they are able to use the gift of the Holy Spirit to spread the Good News through their acts of charity and faithfulness in and beyond our community.

3. Procedures

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

- staff
- governing body

- parents
- students
- Diocesan Education Service
- GIFT team and chaplaincy

In consultation with the Governing Body, the policy will be implemented in September 2020, reviewed every three years, by the Head teacher, HRSE Co-ordinator, the Governing Body, student council and school Staff. The next review date is September 2023.

The policy will be circulated to all members of the Governing Body and all members of staff. The school prospectus should contain a statement about HRSE teaching and details of where to obtain a full copy of the policy upon request. The prospectus should also cover 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.

4. Rationale

As a maintained 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. For example,

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 schools responsibility than teaching about mathematics or English. At Our Lady's 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 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 the knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decision 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."

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

happiness.

5a. 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 following documents.

- 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

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 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 (see Summary section of statutory guidance).	All maintained schools including schools with a sixth form, academies, free schools, non-maintained special schools and alternative provision, including pupil referral units.

		<p>The statutory requirement to provide Health Education does not apply to independent schools – PSHE is already compulsory as independent schools must meet the Independent School Standards as set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.</p> <p>Independent schools, however, may find the principles in the guidance on Health Education helpful in planning an age-appropriate curriculum</p>
<p>The statutory requirements do not apply to sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies or Further Education (FE) colleges, although we would encourage them to support students by offering these subjects. These settings may find the principles helpful, especially in supporting pupils in the transition to FE.</p>		

5b. 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 students 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.

6. 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 (sometimes love is used instead) 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 Our Lady's Catholic College we live out the Gospel values shared in the Beatitudes, throughout the life of school by placing Christ at the centre of all that we do. The staff, teaching and non-teaching, are true witnesses to Gospel values and their strong relationships with the children in our care reflect this. Our behavior for learning policy focuses our students on the correct way to behave and our rules are based

around the acronym FAITH so that they link their behavior with our lives as Christians. The policy requires restorative justice meetings for when relationships have been damaged by pupil or staff behaviour. This requires staff and students to reflect on why they behaved this way and what the consequences of their actions were. It is important that at these meetings it is made clear that following an apology we now move forward to rebuild the relationship and that the person is forgiven. If a student has behaved in a way that means they have a period in the Internal Exclusion Unit they begin that time with a reflection sheet for them to think about their behavior and how they can make sure the behavior is not repeated.

In our prayer and liturgy we talk to our young people about Gospel values and how we use Christ's teachings to inform us of the best way to live our lives.

The establishment of our GIFT (Growing Faith Together Team) has resulted in many young people being confident to plan and deliver prayer, liturgy and workshops for our students and primary students. They are strong witnesses to faith at Our Lady's and the group continues to grow in size.

Our students show a remarkable capacity to care for others. The social action within school is especially impressive in a school with such high levels of social deprivation amongst its students. They are tireless in raising money for a range of charities including local causes e.g. St John's Hospice, Olive Branch food bank and the Life Group, and national and international charities e.g. CAFOD, Cancer Research and a number of schools in Uganda that we support. Students understand that they are called to do this work as Christians.

Each year group experience an Ethos Day during which they are given the time and space to consider different topics. E.g. Building Community, Reconciliation, Faith in Action, choosing good relationships and Should I stay or should I go? Exploring the refugee crisis in a number of countries.

Staff run a Rainbows group for those students who have suffered bereavement of any kind, including those who have suffered a breakdown of relationships at home.

Students are encouraged to pray in different ways. Through daily collective worship students are able to express their belief in God in an atmosphere that is free from criticism. Using the principles of the Quiet Mind project, students are encouraged to use silence to make space for God and reflection.

7. 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, and 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 should 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, marriage 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.
- HRSE will develop attitudes, personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding.
- 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 students to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.
- We will encourage students to learn about expressing their own emotions and being respectful of the emotions and behaviour 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 students' 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 students' 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 students 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 students to develop their own moral framework about accessing information online.
- We will encourage students to recognise the influence of peer pressure and the moral integrity required to say, "no".
- We will support students 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 students about legally protected characteristics and their duty to respect difference.
- We will teach students 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.

8. Inclusion

At Our Lady's Catholic College 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. Learning Support Assistants provide additional support to students within PSHE sessions and in RE and Science lessons. The Learning Support Department also offer support outside of lessons through nurture and ASD groups where students are encouraged to learn about the possible outcomes of the choices they make.

Pupils requiring or requesting extra support, for example because they are transgender, will be treated with dignity and respect and offered support through our pastoral team, our Chaplaincy team and through

seeking appropriate help from other agencies. Students will be encouraged to talk to their families about relationships and seek their advice and support too.

9. Equality

The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that Our Lady's Catholic College endeavors to do its best for all of the pupils, irrespective of ability (physical and mental), race, ethnicity, nationality, maternity, pregnancy, sex, gender identity or orientation or whether they are looked after children.

These obligations are laid out in the Our lady's Catholic College Single Equalities Policy 2012 found on the OLCC website.

Teaching should reflect the law as it applies to relationships, so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the broader legal implications of decisions they may make.

Further guidance is available for schools from the Catholic Education Service at <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/guidance-for-schools/equality>. The guidance covers the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and working with students of other faiths in Catholic schools.

The 2010 Act identifies the following protected characteristics applicable to pupils, sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation (collectively known as the protected characteristics). Age is also a protected characteristic. It does not apply to students, but governors should be aware of this aspect as employers.

Catholic schools should be mindful that our primary mission is to the poor and seek to alleviate any disadvantage. Attention should also focus on the SEND Code of Practice when planning for these subjects to ensure the inclusion of all students in a way that is appropriate for them. **Relationships Education, RSE and Health Education, must be accessible for all pupils and must be borne in mind when planning for pupils with special educational needs** and disabilities who represent a significant minority of pupils.

Teaching in HRSE is closely monitored and all schemes of work are monitored and analysed by the departments in which they are taught to ensure that the work is age appropriate and suitable for the makeup of each class. At Our Lady's we ensure that all subjects are taught in a positive manner allowing students to develop their mental wellbeing and develop sympathy to how others may respond to specific situations. Part of this growth is done by asking questions and being open to share without judgment. At Our Lady's we ensure quality first teaching is the most effective way to ensure that lessons are differentiated, personalized and accessible for all. All staff have access to all SEND information on PARS and SIMS and are able to highlight and monitor where the needs in each class lay. Staff have received CPD and training from the SENCO to given them strategies to implement in their lessons to ensure all students are able to access the learning effectively. Staff are able to discuss with the SENCO and assistant SENCO if extra information is required. At Our Lady's we recognized the importance of educating the whole person and ensuring our students are fully equipped for life after school. We want to educate them to be successful members of society and as such it is important that HRSE lessons are accessible for all students.

Staff are trained to notice signs of vulnerabilities and anxieties, they are equipped to signpost to in school or outside agencies to support the needs of the student. Different agencies that we have regular communication with include CAMHS, ACE, and community youth teams. A more indepth list of agencies we access can be found in the SEN policy. In some cases, students are not able to access the learning for different reasons e.g. bereavement, social anxieties, mental health problems or family circumstances, the teacher would liaise with the SENCO and other members of the LS departments to monitor the child and intervene with other agencies or help where necessary.

At Our Lady's the governors are aware that under the Equality Act action must be taken to deal with particular disadvantages affecting students. This will be monitored by staff members, in particular progress leader, pastoral support officers and linked members of SLT. If there appears to be a specific issue within a group for example, racism, sexism or discrimination against religion, action would be swiftly taken to deal with this matter. This would be done in a number of ways such as assemblies to challenge stereotypes, contact made home to parents to ensure the correct education is given from both home and school. In extreme circumstances school would take action to contact charities or police to come and speak to the students to ensure they are fully aware of the impact of such behaviour in society,

The critical characteristic of Catholic education is that all people are children of God. With this belief, underpinning school life perceived limits on students because of their characteristics must always be subject to challenge as the school is part of the Universal Catholic Church. It is through this lens schools should challenge stereotypes and address behaviours such as homophobia, misogyny and sexism. Schools must be alive to the fact that the approach of the Church may not be the same as the approach taken in other areas of life, such as social media. A clear and consistent message about human dignity must be conveyed through the whole of school life by staff, students and those who support the work of the school such as governors.

Governors at Our Lady's Catholic College understand the implications of the DfE's 2017 guidance Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges for their school. The guidance covers what sexual violence and harassment is, schools' and colleges' legal responsibilities, a whole school or college approach to safeguarding and child protection and how to respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Sadly, students can believe that sexual violence and harassment are just part of growing up. At Our Lady's we recognise that at times during school life there will be challenges faced by our students in how they respond to the aforementioned situations. To enable our students to deal with this in a safe and appropriate way, all students take part in cyber protection assemblies where they are taught the importance of staying safe online and keeping their social media private. During our whole school days with a difference and PSHE lessons, time is spent on how to recognise the signs of good and bad relationships. Advice is given on where to turn to for advice and support if a student feels that they are in an unhealthy relationship or witness someone else who needs help. All staff undertakes safeguarding training and are able to access support from members of senior staff and the school counsellor if anything becomes too challenging for them. During form time and in assemblies we teach the students how to respect others and how to safely challenge situations they feel are unhealthy or unsafe to be in.

All teaching in HRSE, including that which covers areas around the protected characteristics, must be sensitive to the age, cultural background and family experiences of students. The Catholic view of human dignity should challenge the cultural assumptions that can underpin prejudices, such as racism, sexism and religious discrimination. **Catholic schools should robustly challenge homophobia or any inequitable behaviours based on a person's sexual orientation or gender as an infringement of human dignity.** Though schools will teach the Church's view on what it means to be human, and the challenges this offers to a wide range of lifestyles, the needs of the individual students will remain paramount. In a Catholic school, we aim to see the child, a Child of God, as a person in need of love and care. The DfE's guidance makes specific mention of teaching about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender characteristics, which it shortens to LGBT. The guidance states,

"At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. Schools are free to determine how they do this, and we expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at an appropriate point as part of this area of the curriculum."

At Our Lady's we address questions about sexuality and gender as and when they arise. Our school's

behaviour policy identifies all protected characteristics as possible triggers for aggressive or bullying behaviours. We train all staff to support students who are asking questions about themselves or others in these areas in partnership with their families and they know the legal requirements incumbent on the school with specific reference to sex or gender requirements. The dignity of each student is central to our care and we support any questioning child and their families through a culture of listening and seeing them as a person. We do not rush to label but offer children and their families time to discuss and explore what is best for them as individuals within our school community. As a school, we work to challenge all limiting stereotypes around sexuality and gender identities and work to enable each young person to full their God given potential.”

10. Programme of study

A revised programme of study has been prepared to support educators in our family of schools as they enable our young people to grow in faith and understanding of themselves, their relationship with God and with one another. The Department for Education has prepared a statutory programme for ‘Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education’ which will be a compulsory requirement from September 2020. The Diocese of Lancaster began working on Human Relationships and Sex Education (HRSE) in 2016.

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. We hope that this builds on the experience of the home where, as children, we all experience our first expressions of love and form our early relationships. The challenge in school life is to develop this not just in an academic sense, but as a lived expression of belief ultimately, an invitation to hear the Good News.

“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

Creating a climate of wonder can seem a far cry from the modern world our schools are called to serve, though this is our calling as educators in the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Lancaster. Engaging with the Church’s teaching about human loving enables us to share with our young people the wonder of human life and the happiness that is waiting for us in Jesus. As always, this is an invitation, a way to deepen understanding of what it means to be fully human.

The Programme of Study places the Diocese of Lancaster programme next to the statutory obligation it fulfils. Any additional material in HRSE is written in italics so it is easy to identify. Areas from the statutory plan not covered in the HRSE framework are listed at the end of the booklet. Governing bodies and head teachers should be mindful that from 2020 OfSTED will inspect the new ‘Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education’ and Section 48 will continue to examine provisions in HRSE.

At Our Lady’s Catholic College HRSE is taught in personal development lessons in years 7 and 8, RE and Science lessons. A wide range of teaching strategies are used and all staff will receive training on the delivery of HRSE. Students are also given the opportunity to learn about elements of the statutory curriculum that is not covered in the HRSE programme, such as online safety and health education during tailored assemblies, guest speakers and through our days with a difference. Lessons involve the establishment of clear ground rules for discussion. Parents are informed at the start of Year 7 about HRSE is taught in school and lessons always take account of the school’s safeguarding policy which can be found on the OLCC website.

Progress and understanding is monitored through regular assessment in Science and RE in addition to monitoring of PD work. Pupils’ well-being is monitored by the pastoral team and our behavior for learning

policy. The pastoral team and form tutors work with the students to encourage them to be responsible for the choices they make.

11. 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 it was ratified by the governing body.

The school will involve and support parents in learning about HRSE by sharing the programme of study on the website, letters when visitors are coming to school, letters when a sensitive subject is to be taught, information will be in school prospectus and on school website.

Information about HRSE is contained in the school prospectus and the majority of the programme of study is developed through the ethos of the school and in PSHEE, RE and science. However, at times, areas of particular sensitivity may benefit from additional parental support. Parents may be invited into school to discuss the content of HRSE lessons.

Right to be excused from sex education (commonly referred to as the right to withdraw)

Parents have the right to request that their child not participate in some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. Before granting any such request, the head teacher may discuss the application with parents and ensure that they understand the nature and purpose of the curriculum in a Catholic context. A discussion should follow, as appropriate, involving the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. If any meetings take place around the removal of a student this will be recorded and a record of this meeting will be stored with the HRSE coordinator and all relevant members of staff will be informed. Should a parent wish to have their child/ren excused from sex education, they must contact their progress leader no later than the start of the school day in which the lesson is to be taught. The head teacher or progress leader may discuss with parents the benefits of receiving this education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. For example, the possible social or emotional impact of withdrawal, the likelihood of them hearing a peer’s version of the content, rather than the teacher’s. However, parents may prefer to discuss sex education to their child at home instead. Evidence of this will be recorded by the progress leader and information shared with the appropriate staff.

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. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. This process is applicable for pupils with SEND. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the head teacher may want to take a pupil’s specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision. A process for the parental right to withdraw will form part of the policy. Information about this is made available to parents through a letter which is sent home to all students. This policy is also made available on the school’s

website or a hard copy may be requested from the school office if necessary.

12. Teaching HRSE

At Our Lady's Catholic College the Head teacher Helen Seddon is the member of staff responsible for this policy, Nicola Holt is the link governor. HRSE falls into the remit of PD and is overseen by Hannah Kelly (subject lead) and Juliet Duncan (SLT).

At Our Lady's Catholic College the teaching of the Programme of Study will be taught in PHSE lessons in all year group. Part will be also covered in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 Religious Education and Science. In Key Stage 5 HRSE will be taught in general RE and through Enrichment Days.

All staff are involved in fostering attitudes, living Gospel virtues and shaping behaviour based 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.

Teaching and learning about human relationships will be part of the life of the school. However, the Programme of study will be taught through cross curricular dimensions where appropriate, such as R.E., science, PSHE and computing. Sometimes, the children's learning will be best supported by using other agencies, such as the school nurse, or other visitors to school. Such visitors will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at Our Lady's and agree to follow its instruction.

13. Dealing with difficult questions

The Governing Body desires that HRSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where students 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 students 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 train 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

safeguarding procedures.¹

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 students 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, all staff are instructed to read this policy and the start of the year and to confirm that they have read and understood it.

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

Students will be 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 terms of the relevant policies.

¹Sex and Relationships Guidance, 4.5 'Dealing with questions' 0116/2000