

# **St Alban's Catholic High School**



## **RSE Policy**

**Approved by Student Committee on: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**Recommission date: February 2025**

## Context

This policy is informed by *Amoris Laetitia* (Pope Francis 2016), guidance from The Catholic Bishop's Conference (Learning to Love March 2017) and the Diocese of East Anglia statement of Principles and Guidance issued

## Mission Statement

At St Alban's, we strive to provide an excellent education for our students within a caring Christian community where all are respected, valued and supported to achieve their potential. We aim to inspire everyone with the strength and purpose to begin the journey of learning for life, and to prepare our students to lead by example in the modern world. The teaching of the Catholic Church underpins all teaching and learning within our school.

## Dissemination of Mission statement

Our mission statement commits us to the education of the whole person and we believe that RSE is an integral part of this education. In partnership with parents, who are the primary educators of their children in relationships, we aim to provide our students with a 'positive and prudent sexual education' (*Gravissimum Educationis*) which is compatible with their physical, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual maturity, and rooted in a Catholic vision of education and the human person. The Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) Policy of at Alban's Catholic High School conveys the unity and coherence of Church teaching on human sexuality and the dignity of life. RSE is important because of our Christian beliefs about God and about the human person. The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach of all education in a Catholic school. Our approach to RSE is therefore rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian ideals. We want to show why 'sex education' is diminished if it is not integrated into the Church's teaching on matters relating to building loving relationships as it 'can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love' (*Amoris Laetitia*)

It is important that Church teaching does not appear to come across as a series of random or arbitrary prohibitions, but rather a "consistent ethic of life". This approach encourages young people to enter into a deeper relationship with God, themselves and others and is founded on a realisation that:

- We recognise that parents/guardians are the primary educators. We collaborate with them in preparing their children for adult life
- We believe that it is our duty to provide opportunities for our students to prepare for the challenges of growing up with an understanding of individual freedoms and responsibilities for and with others
- We believe that young people fare better academically when more emotionally literate and better informed
- We believe our students should be able to understand the teachings of the Catholic Church, within the Christian community and have an understanding of the moral debates on these issues
- We believe that young people have a right to learn why the Christian community sees the sacrament of marriage as an ideal way to establish relationships of trust and mutual fulfilment
- We believe that effective education about sexuality takes place in the wider context of education about how relationships work
- We believe that students should get opportunities to discuss and reflect on the challenges of growing up, to grow in self-confidence and acquire strategies to help them resist unwelcome pressures
- We believe that it is essential that the teacher and students provide a safe environment for approaching sensitive issues by agreeing ground rules for discussion and tolerance

## Statutory Framework

The statutory framework that surrounds Relationship and Sex Education largely falls within four key areas.

- The National Curriculum
- 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex education (RSE) and Health Education' (2019) DfE
- The Children's Act (2004)
- The Equalities Act (2010) In line with legislation, all Catholic Secondary Schools are required to make provision for Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) for all students registered at the school. Relevant government documents include:

- 2011 Education Act
- 2019 Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex education (RSE) and Health Education (2019) DfE

Parents and carers have the primary responsibility for their children's education in relationships to prepare them for the challenges and responsibilities which maturity brings. This includes information relating to their physical, emotional and sexual development. The teaching offered by our school aims to be complementary to, and supportive of the role of parents. Where RSE lessons are provided in school, parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some, or all, Sex Education. There is no right to withdraw from Relationships or Health Education. We are committed to the holistic approach to sex education, in the conviction that education about sexuality cannot be reduced simply to biological facts. Teaching is structured within a planned, continuous and cross curricula programme, based on values and morality in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church. The biological aspects of puberty and human reproduction will be taught in Science and PSHE lessons. Teachers of PSHE explore self-esteem and the dynamics of relationships. There is complementary work in English lessons through lyrical poetry analysis and an exploration of relationships between fictional characters. PE (Physical Education) teachers also contribute by teaching respect for the human body in the context of health education. In Drama, students investigate and role-play a variety of relationship situations. RE, in particular, analyses various approaches to these moral issues and creates opportunities to draw several of the themes together. PSHE will reflect on how these relationships will impact on individuals and communities. While acknowledging that RSE will be reflected in many parts of the curriculum, each aspect should be informed by the other. Each discipline must speak with consistency about the meaning of human love in the context of the teachings of the Church.

### Inclusion

We understand that young people mature in different ways. Our teaching is respectful of each child's starting point and lessons are framed by this understanding. With this in mind the teaching around human reproduction and sexuality in Year 7 should be left until, at least, the summer term. This ensures there is an opportunity for students to settle into their new school and develop trusting relationships with their peer group and members of staff. Young people are encouraged to respect difference and develop an approach of dialogue. It is imperative that RSE is delivered sensitively, especially with regard to diverse faith and cultural backgrounds and sexual orientation. All points of view must be respected and bullying of any kind will always be treated very seriously. For example, the Catholic Church's teaching on heterosexual marriage as the only environment in which sexual intercourse should take place must not be used as an opportunity to encourage homophobic attitudes and behaviours. The school offers support to all students when there is a request for counselling on issues relating to personal relationships and sex education. Students requiring or requesting additional support will be offered support through our pastoral system, work with our chaplain and through seeking appropriate help from other specialist agencies. Equality and accessibility policy

### Roles and Responsibilities

St Alban's Catholic High School recognises that parents (and other carers who stand in their place) are the first and best educators of their children and that we work in partnership with them and seek to support parents in this role. The school also acknowledges that parents have a right to withdraw their children from the teaching of Sex Education except in those elements which are required by the National Curriculum Science orders (DFE 2020, guidance Page 17). Should parents wish to do so they are asked to notify the school in advance, in writing, to the Headteacher.

The Governors, working through the Chaplaincy Committee, have the responsibility for ensuring there is an up-to-date RSE Policy, which, in consultation with parents and teachers, is in keeping with Catholic teaching. It is the Governors' responsibility to ensure that the policy is available to parents, thereby ensuring that parents know of their right to withdraw their children from Sex Education except in elements required by National Curriculum Science orders.

The Headteacher, with the assistance of the RSE Co-ordinating team (Assistant Headteacher, Head of PSHE and School Chaplain) have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that policy and practice in this area are fulfilled, introducing and reviewing appropriate curriculum content. The RSE team will work closely with curriculum leaders for Science, the Senior Leadership Team and outside agencies such as health professionals and marriage and family life workers (Explore Relationships/LIFE). The RSE Co-ordinating team are responsible for overseeing both curriculum implementation and other elements of school life contributing to RSE. This will include monitoring and evaluating the RSE policy.

Teachers in all subject areas have a responsibility to support the delivery of RSE. In many areas of the curriculum, it is possible for issues concerning relationships and personal growth to arise and it is inevitable that the teaching of an apparently unrelated topic will occasionally lead to a discussion of aspects of sexual behaviour. As a Catholic school, it is imperative that our teaching in this area reflects the doctrine and teaching of the Church, and it is expected that all teachers will treat the issues with the greatest sensitivity while supporting the Catholic principles of the school. Guidance will be given to staff in order for them to handle these discussions appropriately.

Some students may choose to mention instances of sexual behaviour/ issues in class or to individual members of the school community. Staff will be supportive in such situations but should refrain from offering personal advice and should refer the student to members of the Safeguarding Team, Student Support Coordinator or Chaplain. In dealing with such matters, they must follow Safeguarding procedures. They must not guarantee confidentiality and fully support the Catholic ethos of the school.

### Choosing and using resources

Relationship and sex education must be in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. It is the responsibility of the Governing Body, working with the Headteacher and senior Leadership Team, to ensure that this is achieved through careful monitoring of the teaching resources used. In considering the resources, which will be used for RSE, governors should take into account:

- The need to support parents and carers by providing education, which is faithful to the teaching of the Church and appropriate for the ages and stages of development of the students
- The extent to which specific materials can be used to illustrate the beauty of the human being created by God (Theology of the Body, Humanae Vitae, Deus Caritas Est)
- The values implied by specific resources and the way in which they may be used to enhance students' understanding of human development and catholic teaching •
- The accuracy and clarity of material presented

See Appendix A - Curriculum content for Secondary Schools DfE 2020 (page 6-9)

See Appendix B - The structure of this model curriculum (page 10-15)

See Appendix C – Personal, Social, Health and Economics (PSHE) curriculum (page 16)

See Appendix D - Relationship and Sex Education: Guidelines for Staff (page 17)

See Appendix E - External visitors/providers agreement proforma (page 18-22)

The Diocese expects all schools to work in partnership with parents and to inform them about the school's RSE policy and practice. Parents should have the opportunity to view materials and ask questions. It is important that any external visitor to the school is also clear about their role and responsibility while they are in school (please see our Visitors and Volunteers policy).

This policy will be reviewed on a 2 year cycle, led by the RE and PSHE subject leaders and guided by SLT, in consultation with governors, staff and parents. If the policy appears to need modification, then the RE and PSHE subject leaders will report its findings and recommendations to the full governing body. Any changes will then be referred to the Diocese for ratification.

P Dance, Chair of Governors.....Date...05/02/2024.....