



Human Relationships and Sex Education Policy

for
St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy



1. Vision and Mission

Mission Statement:

St Cuthberts Catholic Academy is a welcoming community with Christ at the heart of all that we do. We are a loving, nurturing family where each child is given the opportunity to grow in faith and love for one another. We work together to create a safe, inspiring environment where pupils feel valued and respected.

'At St Cuthbert's we live life with care and enthusiasm learning to make the very best of all our God-given talents and discover our vocation in the world. We learn to love life and each other; to value and respect our diversity and celebrate each other's uniqueness; to share life through being a living example of faith in the community we serve'

Vision for Human Relationships and Sex Education

At St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy, 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 the act of 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.

2. Procedures

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

- Trust board
- Staff
- Parents

In consultation with the Directors, the policy will be implemented in September 2021, reviewed every two years, by the Head teacher, HRSE Co-ordinator, the Directors and school Staff. The next review date is September 2023.

The policy will be circulated to all members of the Directors 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 Directors to ensure that this is up to date.

3. Rationale

As a primary 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 school's responsibility than teaching about

mathematics or English. At (name of 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 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." P.8

The Diocese recognises the value of these curriculum aims. However, Catholic schools also have regard for the spiritual welfare of the students and recognise 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 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 (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.
		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. Independent schools, however, may find the principles in the guidance on Health Education helpful in planning an age- appropriate curriculum
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.		

The pupils at St Cuthbert’s Catholic Academy will follow the Ten:Ten Programme ‘Life to the Full’ which is delivered throughout the year.

Before children make the transition to High School, they have specific puberty sessions which will be delivered by the school nurses.

Each of the sessions is carefully designed and underpinned by teachings of the Catholic Church.

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 directors, and available to parents and for inspection.
2. This should be developed in consultation with parents and the wider community.
3. Primary schools should have clear parameters on what children will be taught in the transition year before moving to secondary school, and that parents be consulted.
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 St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy we keep the values of the Gospels, as shared in the Beatitudes, at the centre of what we do. Each child is treated as an individual, as a child of God.

Gospel values and virtues are modelled daily by staff, all of whom set good examples of how to behave towards each other and towards families. Staff model good relationships with one another; they show care and concern and are happy and cheerful. Children are encouraged to model this behaviour and progress in their understanding of moral attitudes throughout their time at St Cuthbert's. Children are supported to reflect on how Jesus cared for others and to grow in faith. He demonstrated compassion; he listened, healed, taught and forgave.

Assemblies and Worship create a real sense of belonging. They provide the children with an opportunity to reflect silently on the word of God and allow time for children to express gratitude.

As pupils progress through Key Stage Two they will develop a deeper understanding of what is moral behaviour and be able to say why this is important for personal happiness and for a closer relationship with God. The children are given opportunities to learn how prayer enables them to make space for God in their lives and offers opportunities for reflection and growth through worship, reflection, circle time and Liturgy. By the end of Year 6 children should be able to explain some behaviour choices by reference to their beliefs and values, for example, by referring to Jesus' teachings about forgiveness.

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.

- i) To develop self-respect and love of self.
 - ii) To invite young people to develop and deepen a loving relationship with God.
 - iii) To invite young people to understand that their life has a purpose.
 - iv) 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.
 - v) 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.
 - vi) A strong awareness of their own safety and the nature of consent.
 - vii) To have an understanding of the law in England about Equality and Marriage, appropriate to age and maturity.
- *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 seek to develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity in all.*
 - *We will seek to enable children to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.*
 - *We will encourage children 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 children's knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for their own safety.*
 - *We will develop children's experience of what it is to be happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and gratification and value patience.*
 - *We will teach children about the media and their choices, about what to watch, what games to play, what rules apply and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.*
 - *We will support children 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 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 sanctity of marriage and family life as a way to live in loving relationships with others and with God.*
 - *We will encourage children to understand difference and be mindful of people who are vulnerable to discrimination because of their personal or cultural characteristics.*

8. Inclusion

At St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy 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.

Our family support team works closely with pupils and families to provide emotional and practical support, with the help of multi-agency partnerships. This includes, additional needs, transgender pupils, mental physical and emotional wellbeing, family bereavements, domestic abuse, and police involvement. We have an open door approach to encourage parents to seek support and guidance.

9. Equality

The directors have wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy endeavours 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.

St Cuthbert's ensures equality to all through teaching of acceptance and tolerance of difference through our RE curriculum, PSHE, prayer and Liturgy. Respect for each other is at the heart of everything that is done at St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy. Our school mission statement, behaviour policy, equality policy and our Christian faith underpin all practice in school.

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 directors 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.**

Our HRSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where children experience a growing appreciation for their well-being, and that of others, and a deeper understanding that the Church teaches a path of wholeness of mind, body and spirit. For pupils with disabilities and other additional vulnerabilities, our lessons may need deeper thought and repetition, to ensure that all pupils are receiving age-appropriate, useful HRSE that ultimately enables them to live healthy, safe lives. Staff recognise that not all disabilities or vulnerabilities are the same, and not all special needs have the same requirements.

The Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance for RSE and health education states: "Schools should consider the make-up of their own student body, including the gender and age range of their pupils, and consider whether it is appropriate or necessary to put in place additional support for pupils with particular protected characteristics (which mean that they are potentially at greater risk)." (DfE, 2019).

Pupils who have social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues may find HRSE education difficult. Their potential existing challenges with engaging in social situations, dislike of change and difficulties around forming healthy, trusting relationships can all be barriers. Creating safe spaces for our children to learn HRSE is vital; staff need to be sensitive to

possible triggers, safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures; these are on a need-to-know basis and staff will be informed by SLT.

We have a co-ordinated approach within our in-school provisions including co-ordination between SENDCO and pastoral team members. This may include access to mentoring and 1:1 counselling. Utilising external agencies such as CAMHS and Headstart provides further expertise to support children with SEND. Additional support via the AWAKEN Project, a multi-agency initiative led by police, social services and health, enables school to have an integrated approach to supporting particular children at risk of exploitation.

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 directors.

At St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy, the children are taught that they have been created in the image and likeness of God. This is modelled, in partnership with the child's parents/carers who are their first educators, through actions and words by every member of staff in school. Through our daily teaching; class and whole school liturgies; nurturing circle-time sessions and HRSE curriculum, children are given the opportunity to listen to, discuss, question, learn from and ultimately understand each other in a calm, caring and safe environment. If necessary, children are identified in partnership with the school's nurturing team, as needing further support with their own well-being, an age-appropriate programme is put in place – with parental/carer agreement, to support the child to appreciate their personal dignity.

Directors at St Cuthbert's Catholic Academy 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 a normal and acceptable part of growing up.

These aspects of school life are challenged and a culture of respect is fostered based on reciprocal dignity. For example, at St Cuthbert's children learn the nature of personal privacy, to respect their own bodies. Our school pastoral team shares relevant resources when required to support understanding of personal privacy. For example, children in Key Stage 1 learn about 'private parts' through using the NSPCC video 'Pantosaurus'.

At St Cuthbert's staff are supported in this area through a range of relevant training, face-to face as well as online. Staff are kept up to date with any changes to the KCSIE and complete level 1 safeguarding annually as a minimum. Staff have also accessed PREVENT awareness training, either face-to-face or online. Staff have had training through the HRSE online modules provided by **Ten Ten Resources** and the **Catholic Education Service** in conjunction with the **Department for Education**. Staff are also signposted to other suitable online training. Senior leaders in school also undertake Designated Safeguarding Leader training.

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."

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. Directors 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.

The Diocese of Lancaster offer a programme of study for its family of schools. The programme of study is based on the teachings of the Church and aims to help young people develop their sense of purpose and character. It should be taught as part of a broad and balanced curriculum and allow children to express alternative beliefs and viewpoints where they hold such views. The programme of study will be supported by published resources, recommended by the Diocese, as well as those recommended by the school. The strands from the Diocese curriculum wheel form the foundation of St Cuthbert's scheme of learning. The areas of the statutory curriculum not already covered by the HRSE programme of study have been embedded into our school's scheme of learning for each year group. These will be taught either through discreet HRSE lessons, PSHE, or through the wider curriculum.

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 directors. This policy was brought to parents’ attention through our newsletter and was displayed on our school website for consultation, informing parents of when sessions will take place, covering areas of particular sensitivity, such as puberty. On these occasions, where children would benefit from additional parental support, letters will be sent home and parents may be invited into school to discuss the content of HRSE lessons.

11. 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, it would be good practice for the headteacher to 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. Schools will want to record and document this process.

Parents are informed of their right to withdraw their children from HRSE lessons, however, they are not allowed to withdraw their children from statutory Science lessons. *Should parents wish to withdraw their child(ren) they must contact the Executive Headteacher no later than the end of the day prior to the lesson taking place.*

12. Teaching and Assessing H R S E.

The R.E subject leader and the Senior Leadership Team will consult with class teachers to monitor lessons and work in R.E. The Parish Priest also works closely in supporting the school. All classes will be taught HRSE; the three core themes will be linked with the R.E Scheme of Learning. The school nurse will deliver ‘growing up’ puberty talks to Year 5 and 6 which cover personal hygiene and how our bodies change as we grow.

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, computing and PSHE. 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 St Teresa’s Catholic Primary School and agree to follow its instruction.

There are elements of the statutory framework that are not covered in the Diocese of Lancaster’s HRSE programme. These elements are listed at the end of the 2020 programme of study.

Assessment forms part of the statutory framework. The HRSE programme includes a self-audit for schools. The HRSE

framework and the elements of the statutory framework not covered by HRSE are monitored and assessed through our year group collaborative planning, written pieces of work and teacher's notes on discussions. The school uses online annual surveys to evaluate pupils' well-being.

13. Dealing with difficult questions

The Directors desire that HRSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where students experience a growing appreciation for well-being, 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 co-ordinator 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 child protection procedures.¹

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

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.

All members of staff are given up-to-date safeguarding policies annually and receive regular training. A master copy of the policy can also be found on the school website or in the office.

The school will ensure that this policy is available for all staff, directors, 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.

14. Supporting children and young people deemed to be at risk.

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.

This should always be done within the safeguarding framework of the school 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 in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and confidentiality procedures. If any member of staff is concerned about questions asked by pupils or information shared by pupils, this is brought to the attention of the Executive Head teacher who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or the Family Support Worker. All staff are aware of the procedures in school when there is concern about the well-being of any child.