

Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School

Ysgol Gatholig Bendigaid Carlo Acutis



Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Ratification date:	February 2023
Review Date:	February 2025
Staff member responsible for writing, reviewing & updating	Mrs S J Hopkins
Person responsible for monitoring & implementation of the policy	Mrs S J Hopkins

1. Introduction

This policy has been created using Diocesan policy templates for Primary and Secondary schools.

It customised to suit the young people school served by our new school and reflects the context within our school is living out its mission. The policy was approved by the Governing Body of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School on February 28th 2023, following consultation with parents, staff and students, as appropriate, using the tools for use by Governing Bodies published by the CES.

2. Vision and Mission

Our Mission Statement at Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic school is;

'Inspiring faith, families and futures with Christ'.

Christ is at the core of all that we do and we display Gospel values in our dealings with one another. It is through this mission that the school aims to prepare our young people for a rapidly changing world. In connection with this our Relationships and Sex Education needs to be both informative and values based with the aim of encouraging students to formulate informed opinions, positive attitudes as well as developing positive self-esteem, safe in the knowledge that they are gifted with the love of God.

The staff and governors of Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School fully recognise the contribution they make to the Relationships and Sex Education of learners at our school. We model the teaching of the Catholic Church, and seek to deliver education for personal relationships in a sensitive and relevant manner to our learners. Relationships and Sex education is lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of creating stable and loving relationships within marriage, respect, love and care. It is also about developing the Catholic Pupil Profile values and informing conscience as well as understanding the teaching of the Church on sex, sexuality and sexual health. For this reason we are committed to the development of the whole person in the awareness that all human values find their fulfilment in Christ. *"Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being.... It is an integral part of the development of the personality and of the educative process"*.

(Educational Guidance In Human Love: Sacred Congregation For Catholic Education)

We emphasise that our sexuality is a special gift of God.

Using a framework that is permeated with enduring Christian values, based on the Gospels, and taught with sensitivity within the Catholic ethos of our school, we will equip our learners with the necessary skills to build a solid foundation of moral principles

so that they are able to acknowledge, recognise and respond to the complexities of personal and sexual relationships in an increasingly secular world. Our aim to help our young people to live in accordance with Church teaching and to know what it is to be truly human.

“Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you”

(Romans 12:2)

“It is not easy to approach the issue of sex education in an age when sexuality tends to be trivialised and impoverished. It can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving. In such a way, the language of sexuality would not be sadly impoverished but illuminated and enriched.”

(Amoris Laetitia 280)

Vision for Relationship and Sex Education

At Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School we are inspired by Jesus to lead lives that are purposeful and enable us to fulfil our talents, following the example of our patron saint. We care for one another and show mutual respect and love through our relationships with one another. Jesus is invited into our lives.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to lead a full life with him by explaining what makes people blessed or happy. Through this we grow in our understanding of how loving our neighbour enables us to be fulfilled too.

Such fulfillment can only be truly achieved when we have a good relationship with ourselves, recognising our God-given dignity, which enables us to enter into relationships with other people in our lives, which help 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, created equal and called to grow in love for him through the person of Jesus Christ and to spread the Good News through the work of the Holy Spirit. We are gifted with the love of God and the ability to love others.

Human 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, a life of integrity and wholeness of body, spirit and mind as they grow and change as children and then into young adults.

3. Procedures

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

- staff
- governing body
- parents
- Diocesan Education Service
- school council
- students

The Consultation process involved a draft policy being devised by the Executive Headteacher and RSE leads,. This draft was shared with the Year 11 pupil leadership team who then presented it to the School Senedd. Following acceptance and a few amendments, the next stage was a sharing with parents and school staff. The policy was presented to Governors for comments before ratification.

In consultation with the Governing Body, the policy will be implemented in the academic year of 2022-23, reviewed every two years, by the Head teacher, RSE Leads, the Governing Body and school staff. The next review date is February 2025.

The policy will be circulated to all members of the Governing Body and all members of staff. The school prospectus will contain a statement about RSE teaching and details of where to obtain a full copy of the policy upon request. The Diocesan Director Education/ Director of RE will be sent a copy of the school's RSE policy and it is the duty of the Governing Body to ensure that this is up to date.

4. Rationale

As a Catholic school in the Province of Cardiff, Menevia, Wrexham and Herefordshire we use the term Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) as we believe that sex education is set within a wider context of relationship education, which itself is about all aspects of growing a fulfilled and happy life. This is why the Diocesan RSE Curriculum, based on the CES 'Model Curriculum', organizes content in the three overarching themes of 'Created to love by God', 'Created to love one another' and 'Created to live in community'. Sex education in the narrower sense is but one dimension of this greater whole.

The defining belief of Christianity is that God took on human form. This endows the human person 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 educates 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 any other curriculum subject. At Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School we teach young people about how to form relationships, including understanding loving relationships and acknowledging that young people's first experience of love is in the home. We encourage the young people in our school to recognise that they are all children of God and that each person shares a God given dignity. As they 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).

We also encourage young people to know that God's love for humanity is so great, he is waiting to forgive us:

“We are all sinners, but God heals us with an abundance of grace and mercy.”

Pope Francis

This flourishing and the offer of forgiveness is the basis for all relationships in our school. Teaching about relationships in our schools is supported by our virtue formation programme, the Catholic Pupil Profile.

Legal guidelines suggest that relationship and sex education should build on the children's own experiences, be sensitive to the specific domestic contexts the children come from, form attitudes and values towards relationships, develop personal and social skills and increase the knowledge and understanding of each young person as they grow about their relationships and well-being, including sexual health.

We support all these aims in providing relationships and sex education by incorporating them into the wider understanding of human relationships and human formation as reflected in our Diocesan 'RSE Toolkit'.

5. Statutory framework

In teaching RSE, our schools fulfil the statutory requirements for Wales as published here: [https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/cross-cutting-themes-for-designing-your-curriculum/#relationships-and-sexuality-education-\(rse\):-statutory-guidance](https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/cross-cutting-themes-for-designing-your-curriculum/#relationships-and-sexuality-education-(rse):-statutory-guidance)

6. Virtues and Values

Gospel virtues and values underpin the RSE curriculum. The Christian tradition describes behaviour 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 of 'charity') are about developing the habits of being open to the work of the Holy Spirit and developing a deeper relationship with God through living a balanced and 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). Our schools use the 'Catholic Pupil Profile' as our main tool for formation in virtue in an educational setting.

At Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School, staff and students are encouraged to practice and live out of the virtues of the 'Pupil Profile' in parallel to progressing in knowledge and understanding about moral behaviour throughout their time at school. In doing so, we also fulfil the 'Core Purposes' in our schools by means of the 'Catholic Pupil Profile' as detailed in the Provincial 'Professional Learning Programme for the New Curriculum'.

Throughout the primary phase of education, children are encouraged to say 'thank you' to God; to be happy and cheerful and to care about other people. They learn to reflect on their behaviour in the light of the example of Jesus' care for others, to value kindness and empathy in themselves and others and to evaluate their behaviour, giving reasons for the choices they have made.

As learners 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. They are also given the chance to reflect on themselves as an individual, their relationship with their friends, family and wider community and their impact and influence on the wider world.

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 teaching about forgiveness.

As they progress through Secondary phase, the young people are encouraged to grow up to be thoughtful and reflective about their attitudes and behaviour towards themselves and others, to develop self-confidence and self-control, distinguishing right from wrong in what they know and how they act. An important part of this is the ability to express what they believe about God in an atmosphere that is free from criticism. They are given the opportunities and tools to show love and care for themselves and others, and to live lives that are hope-filled.

They are also given opportunities to learn how prayer enables them to make space for God in their lives and offers opportunities for reflection and growth. They learn to explain the choices they make with reference to conscience and a moral framework, and to deepen habits of happiness and fulfilment.

7. The Aim and Objectives of RSE

The aim of RSE is part of our aim to educate the complete human person:

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 learners, families, and staff.

RSE should therefore deepen the following areas of understanding:

- To develop self-knowledge, and 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 is 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 that is appropriate to the stage of maturity of the young people;
- A strong awareness of their own safety and the nature of appropriate consent;
- To have an understanding of the law in England and Wales about Equality and Marriage, appropriate to age and maturity.

To achieve these aims:

- 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 understanding of the nature of intimacy and 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 of 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 how to make good 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 a healthy, good 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 the damage that drugs, alcohol and promiscuity 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 Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School we identify that young people mature in different ways and at different speeds. Our teaching about relationships and sexuality is respectful of each child's starting point, their faith, culture and background. Lessons are framed by this understanding and young people encouraged to respect each other in their differences, and develop an approach of dialogue.

The ALN provision across the school is available for guidance for staff and also for learners to seek additional support should any issue present itself at any point within the programme. This maybe a Counselling session, further clarity on topics discussed or referrals following a disclosure e.g. Child Protection.

9. Equality

The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School endeavours to do its best for all of the learners, irrespective of ability (physical and mental), race, ethnicity, nationality, maternity, pregnancy, sex, gender identity or orientation or whether they are looked after children.

Additional details of our commitment to equality at our school can be found in our Strategic Equality Policy on our website, which contains a Strategic Equality Plan with clear timelines and responsibilities.

10. Programme of study

The Diocese recommends appropriate resources to its family of schools in 'best practice' advice issued by the Archdiocesan Education department. These resources range from ages 3-19 years and provide areas of study and outcomes for the young people it serves in the Diocesan RSE Curriculum.

It is envisaged that this curriculum will be taught by means of authorised resources in discreet lessons, in cross-curricular lessons, particularly R.E. and science and fundamentally embedded in the ethos of the school through assemblies, classroom discussions and the centring of all relationships in school on the person of Jesus Christ.

The programme of study is based on the understanding of the Church of human nature and human sexuality, and aims to help young people develop their sense of purpose and character. It is taught as part of a broad and balanced curriculum and thus fulfils statutory requirements. In its content and manner of teaching it makes space for children and young people to express alternative viewpoints where they hold such views.

As in all lessons, a variety of teaching strategies (discussion/group work, self-analysis, information giving – audio/visual presentation, meditation, question and answer, guest speakers) will be implemented by staff in order for student engagement and best possible outcomes. Staff recognise the value of each individual and that young people are at different stages in their understanding and therefore is sympathetic and sensitive towards the individual needs and concerns of their learners. At all times in the delivery the correct biological terms are used. The nature of material is always appropriate to the age of the learners and all terms are explained to avoid misunderstanding and confusion. Questions often arise in a classroom context that refer to controversial issues. These questions are dealt with honestly and in as mature a way as appropriate to the developmental maturity of the class; in such a situation, learners would be encouraged to discuss these matters with their parents, and parents will be informed by letter. All staff are careful to create an environment in which learners can be open and honest without fear of embarrassment. Any tendency to immaturity, insensitivity and lack of tolerance will be discouraged. Ground rules should be formulated and discussed with learners. These will include the fact that the work will be done without anyone having to answer personal questions or reveal private or family situations.

11. Parents

The Church recognises parents as the first educators of their children. Our schools exist to assist parents in this task, which includes RSE. The role of the school is thus that of assisting and completing (where needed) 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.

The right to withdraw from RSE lessons has been removed due to the introduction of Curriculum for Wales and thus RSE is now statutory across all schools in Wales. The right to withdraw falls in line with the roll out of the Curriculum. The right to withdraw was removed from all primary sectors and Year 7 in September 2022 and Year 8 to Year 11 will be removed on a rolling basis as below:

Year 8 - September 2023

Year 9 - September 2024

Year 10 - September 2025

Year 11 - September 2026

The school will involve and support parents in learning about RSE by sharing the programme of study/published resources to be used, letters when visitors are coming to school, letters when a sensitive subject is to be taught, information in school prospectus and on school website, listening to questions etc.

Information about RSE is contained in the school prospectus and the majority of the programme of study is developed through the ethos of the school. However, at times, areas of particular sensitivity, such as puberty, will benefit from additional parental support and at such times, letters will be sent home and parents may be invited into school to discuss the content of RSE lessons.

12. Teaching RSE

Currently, in our transition period, the RSE leads from across the school work together as a team and report to the EHT. These leads are;

Miss R Moore – Bishop Hedley Campus

Mrs E Davies – St Aloysius Campus

Mrs H Reddy – St Illtyd's Campus

Mrs N Long – St Mary's Campus

They are supported by the RE link Governor, Canon Barry English. The Executive Headteacher, Mrs Sarah Hopkins will have overall responsibility for RSE. All staff will deliver elements of the RSE through PSE/tutorial sessions, sensitive elements will be reinforced through Religious Studies lessons. On occasions external agencies and speakers may be invited in to speak to pupils on the topic of RSE including the school nurse, TenTen Theatre, community police liaison officer etc.

Insofar as visiting agencies are involved in teaching RSE in our school, they will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic School and will agree in writing to follow the appropriate instructions. The 'protocol' available on the CES website will be used for this purpose.

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. Guest speakers/visitors will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at Blessed Carlo Acutis Catholic school and will agree in writing to follow the instructions. The appropriate 'protocol' available on the CES website will be used for this purpose.

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

The Governing Body desires that RSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where students 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.

Like all other subjects, RSE always needs to be taught in a differentiated manner appropriate to the maturity of the children. It needs 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.

Part of this is creating an atmosphere where questions can be asked openly, knowing that their questions will be answered and knowing that these questions will not be judged negatively by staff or other students. It is vital, therefore, that time is invested in creating this framework of mutual trust and care, whilst respecting personal information.

The RSE co-ordinators must be given access to support and training to facilitate teachers to enable such discussions by creating carefully negotiated ground rules and distancing strategies.

The following guidance for dealing with questions in RSE will be adhered to:

- *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 learners 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 are prepared 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 important to acknowledge this, and to suggest that the pupil or teacher or both together research the question later;*
- *If a question 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 been treated with respect, 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.*

(DfE Sex and Relationships Guidance, 4.5 'Dealing with questions' 0116/2000)

Questions asked by students that are a cause for concern for the teacher, for example because of their explicit or graphic content, will be addressed in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and confidentiality procedures, which all learners are aware of.

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. e.g. Safeguarding. This policy will be supported by the Equality and Diversity Policy and the Good Conduct Code Policy