



DIOCESE OF NOTTINGHAM

## RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

### A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

*'I have come that you might have life and have it to the full'*  
(John 10:10)

The Government is introducing compulsory **Relationships, Sex and Health Education** at secondary level from September 2020. This is not new for us in Catholic schools, we have always placed a strong emphasis on the development of the 'whole person' through our distinctive education which seeks to *form* as well as *inform* young people in preparation for life.

This is what the Government guidelines say about **Relationships and Sex Education**: *it will build on the teaching at primary; it aims to give young people the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds. By the end of secondary school, pupils will have been taught content on:*

- Families
- Respectful relationships including friendships
- Online media
- Being safe
- Intimate and sexual relationships, including sexual health



**Health Education** is described as giving young people the information they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing, to recognise issues in themselves and others and to seek support as early as possible when issues arise. By the end of secondary school, pupils will be taught content on:

- Mental wellbeing
- Internet safety and harms
- Physical health and fitness
- Healthy eating
- Drugs, alcohol and tobacco
- Health and prevention
- Basic first aid
- Changing adolescent body

**Further information about this can be found by searching 'relationships and health education' on GOV.UK**

In our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Nottingham, this content will be delivered as part of the 'whole curriculum' where we seek to develop each child's knowledge and understanding of themselves as a sexual being, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with self and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience. We teach this precisely 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 to all education in a Catholic school. Our approach to Relationships, Sex and Health Education is therefore rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching of the human person and presented in a positive framework of Christian anthropology (the search for the unique reflection of God in each person).

Our schools' programmes will enshrine Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. The programmes will also promote those virtues which are essential in responding to God's call to love others with a proper respect for their dignity and the dignity of the human body.

We have based our curriculum on the model curriculum produced by the Catholic Education Service. It will be taught through the following themes:

### **Created and loved by God**

The Christian imperative to love self, made in the image and likeness of God, shows the importance of valuing and understanding oneself as the basis for personal relationships.

### **Created to love others**

God is love. We are created out of love for love. The command to love is the basis of all Christian morality.

### **Created to live in community (local, national and global)**

The command to love one another as God loves us is the basis of all Christian morality. Human beings are relational by nature and live in the wider community. Through our exchange with others, our mutual service and through dialogues, we attempt to proclaim and extend the Kingdom of God for the good of individual and society.



Providing a programme that offers a range of viewpoints, teaches clear scientific information as well as covering the aspects of the law pertaining to RSE (such as forced-marriage, the recognition and reporting of sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent, contraception, body image and legislation relating to equality) is not incompatible with the school's promotion of Catholic teaching.

The Church has always acknowledged that **parents** are the 'first teachers' of their children. Therefore, the role of Catholic schools is to work in partnership with parents at all times and to '*complement*' but not replace the primary role of parents. In order to do this, schools will involve parents in the review of their policy on this area and parents will always have the right to express an opinion. Parents do not have the right to withdraw their child from Health Education or the Relationships element of Relationships and Sex Education but may request that their child is withdrawn from some or all of the lessons on Sex Education. However, before you do so, please speak to your child's school as it is important that you understand precisely how this will be delivered. The science curriculum also includes content on human development, including reproduction, from which there is no right to withdraw.

In order for Catholic Relationships Education and Health Education to be fully effective, we believe that it needs to:

- be faithful to the Church's vision of human wholeness whilst recognising the contemporary context in which we live today;
- involve parents as they are primary educators of their child;
- provide a positive view of human sexuality and dignity of the human person;
- equip young people with the ability to make practical judgements about the right choice to make in particular circumstances;
- explore and promote virtues which are essential to promoting respect and dignity;
- be delivered in an age appropriate way which reflects the development of the child;
- be part of the cross-curricular work in both primary and secondary schools;
- be sensitive to the needs of the individual pupil and recognise the mix of pupils with different sexual orientations, genders and family backgrounds in each class.

**If you would like to discuss this in greater detail, please contact your child's school.**