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Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Statutory Requirements and Catholic Church Education Guidance

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 are made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and provide that pupils receiving primary education must be taught Relationships Education, pupils receiving secondary education must be taught RSE and that all primary and secondary pupils must be taught Health Education. The new subjects of Relationships Education and RSE must be taught in all schools. To give effect to the duty in section 34 of the 2017 Act and the power in section 35 of that Act, the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019 amend existing provisions in the Education Act 1996 and the Education Act 2002 and insert new provisions into the Education (Pupil Referral Units) (Application of Enactments) (England) Regulations 2007, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the Non-Maintained Special Schools (England) Regulations 2015. The new provisions include a requirement for the Secretary of State to publish guidance on Relationships Education, RSE, and Health Education; require schools to have regard to that guidance; require schools to make a statement of policy on their provision of Relationships Education and RSE; and set out the circumstances in which a pupil is to be excused from RSE. As an Independent School the guidance in relation to Health Education is met under PSHE Education (Independent Schools Standards) Regulations 2014.

As the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education reminds us:

“.....Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others, of feeling, of expressing and of living human love. Therefore, it is an integral part of the education process.

“.... Children and young people should be helped to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual qualities... they should receive a positive and prudent education in matters relating to sex... And young people have the right to be stimulated to make sound moral judgements based on well-formed conscience and to put them into practice with a sense of personal commitment...”

Gravissimum Educationis (Para 32) - Second Vatican Council

This is particularly important for a boarding school, where the school seeks to complement and support the training already given by home and family.

Aims

The aim of RSE at Woldingham is to give students the information they need to help them develop healthy, nurturing relationships of all kinds, not just intimate relationships. It will enable them to know what a healthy relationship looks like and what makes a good friend, colleague and a successful marriage or other type of committed relationship. This will help students understand the positive effects that good relationships have on their mental wellbeing, identify when relationships are not right and understand how such situations can be managed. It should be read in conjunction with the Goals and Criteria of the Sacred Heart and the School's policy document on PSHE (Thrive).

Effective RSE does not encourage early sexual experimentation. It teaches young people to understand human sexuality and to respect themselves and others. It enables young people to mature, build their confidence and self-esteem and understand the reasons for delaying sexual activity. Effective RSE will also support them throughout life, to develop safe, fulfilling and healthy sexual relationships, at the appropriate time.

Woldingham School therefore aims to provide students with the opportunities to:

- Gain a full knowledge and understanding to accept their own and other's physical and emotional development and sexuality;
- Help them develop a moral framework within which they can make informed and responsible decisions about their relationships and sexual behaviour;
- Enjoy relationships based on mutual respect, dignity and responsibility;
- Appreciate the value of a stable family life, marriage and the responsibilities of parenthood.

Objectives

We consider that great care will be taken to match the RSE provided to the maturity of the students involved, which may not always correspond to their chronological age. Therefore, we follow up whole year-group sessions with tutor group discussion in smaller groups and one-to-ones. Differentiation is expected in all lessons at Woldingham and Thrive is no exception.

RSE will encompass, in addition to the facts about human reproduction processes and behaviour, consideration of the broader emotional and ethical dimensions of sexual attitudes. In dealing with sensitive issues, such as contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infection (including HIV) and abortion, the teacher will aim to offer balanced and factual information and to acknowledge the major moral and ethical issues alive in the world today. Students' questions will be answered sensitively, with due consideration for particular religious or cultural factors bearing on the discussion of sexual issues.

Contents headings for relationships and sex education

- Families- including different types of committed stable relationships such as marriage and other long- term relationships.
- The roles and responsibilities of parents
- Recognition of unhealthy relationships and how to seek help or report concerns (including sexual harassment and sexual violence)
- Characteristics of positive and healthy friendships- management of conflict and reconciliation
- Stereotypes, in particular ones based on gender, sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, age or disability and how they can cause damage.
- Respect and tolerance of others
- Bullying, including cyberbullying
- Equality Act- legal rights and responsibilities with reference to protected characteristics as defined in Equality Act 2010
- Online and Media- expectations of behaviour; risks and staying safe online; the impact of viewing harmful content; sending 'nudes' or sexually explicit messages; the damage pornography can have on relationships; the impact of unhealthy or obsessive comparisons online (including body image); risks of gambling; how to identify harmful behaviour online.
- The concepts and laws relating to sexual consent, sexual exploitation and abuse (including, for example, grooming, rape, domestic abuse, forced marriage, FGM) and how these can affect current and future relationships.
- Intimate sexual relationships: how to recognise positive aspects of intimate relationships including mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests, sex and friendship.
- The changing adolescent body- puberty facts for males and females and menstrual wellbeing; how physical and mental changes can happen simultaneously.
- Reproductive health including facts about menstruation, menopause, fertility and the impact of lifestyle on fertility.
- How all aspects of health can be affected by choices made in relationships e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing.
- Contraception, including options available and where to get advice.
- Pregnancy, including miscarriage and the choices available; medically and legally accurate, impartial information on all options, including abortion, adoption and keeping a baby.
- Sexually Transmitted Infections: transmission, safer sex (including condom use) and the importance of and facts about testing. This must include HIV/AIDS information.
- Mental wellbeing: how to recognise and talk about emotions and how to recognise early signs of mental wellbeing concerns; information about common types of mental illness and the benefits of physical exercise and time outdoors; how voluntary work can have a positive effect on mental wellbeing and happiness.

Organisation of relationships and sex education

A coherent Relationships and Sex Education Programme is taught as part of the formal curriculum using

a cross-curricular approach. The result is a well-planned yet adaptable, integrated, progressive response to the needs of the students at each age and stage and responding sensitively to their experiences or to items in the news or in society generally.

A significant amount of RSE will be covered as part of Key Stage 3 Health Education, Science, Computer Science and Theology. In Key Stage 4, it is delivered through the Thrive Programme and the Science curriculum and builds on the moral values and decision-making aspects of Theology in Year 9. During some set Thrive sessions, external speakers and organisations who bring specific expertise about potentially sensitive issues are invited to run presentations and workshops for the students. There are formal and informal Thrive sessions with tutors throughout the year. All speakers are carefully selected to ensure their manner and style is known to suit the needs of the students. Please refer to the Thrive handbook for details of visiting speakers.

Education in personal relationships and sexuality cannot always be confined to a taught programme. Students learn above all from the relationships and attitudes they experience and that are modelled in their lives at school and elsewhere, whether those are planned aspects of the programme or not. They also learn through co-curricular activities. At Woldingham, all members of our community reflect and communicate the Church's understanding of the dignity of the human person, the importance of human freedom; of the common good and a proper understanding of conscience. These values are also reflected in our adherence to the Human Rights Act, 1998, in accordance with our Safeguarding Policy.

Teaching methods

All teaching will be carried out in sympathy with the Christian values and the Goals and Criteria of the Sacred Heart and with sensitive regard to the relationships of the students and their parents. Every effort is made to ensure that RSE meets the needs of all students with their diverse experiences, including those with SEND.

Please refer to the subject handbooks for detailed information about classroom methods.

Specific issue statements and sensitive issues

We are a Catholic school committed to Christian values. However, we recognise the importance of an approach which takes account of differing perspectives in a culturally diverse society.

Sexual health and HIV

An essential part of personal development is the promotion and maintenance of sexual health. Students need accurate information about sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and of its personal and physiological consequences, including the advances made in medicine that have made such a difference to those infected with the virus, despite which, in the absence of a cure, prevention is a key element in halting its spread. While the Church offers us a vision of human sexuality within the context of faithful relationships, we are also part of a wider society where there is a plurality of values, including within the families of our students. The widespread advocacy of so-called 'safer-sex', both in personal behaviour and public policies, will be critically discussed, so that all risks involved in sexual activity are clearly understood.

Contraception

The purpose and main methods of contraception are explained as part of the Health Education, PSHE and Science courses, as well as information as to where discreet contraception advice for individuals is available, both in and out of school. Moral and ethical issues concerning contraception are discussed as part of the Theology syllabus. Whilst we recognise that the teaching of other Christian churches differs from our own and that this is a matter for personal conscience, discussion about the use of contraception will be placed within the context of the Roman Catholic Church.

Abortion

The topic of abortion is covered as part of the Theology syllabus. Living in a society where abortion is legal, it is important that all viewpoints are discussed openly. However, even though there are differences between the churches in their approach to abortion, all start from the belief that human life is God-given and therefore sacred.

Diversity and inclusion – homosexuality

We recognize that the RSE policy must be sensitive to the range of religious and cultural views about sexual behaviours whilst ensuring that students have the access to the learning they need to stay healthy, safe and to understand their rights as an individual. The policy also covers the concept of equality and the legislation relating to it. RSE fosters LGBTQ+ equality, challenging all forms of discrimination and bullying. It is always respectful of how students choose to identify themselves, understanding that their sexual orientation and gender identity maybe 'emerging'.

Attitudes to Homosexuality are part of the Ethics section of the Year 9 Theology curriculum. Same sex relationships also appear as part of the Thrive Programme and discussions also take place, as questions on the topic arise in subjects such as in Theology, the study of literature and current affairs, among many other school subjects. Staff will make it clear that while most people experience sexual attraction to persons of the opposite sex, same-sex attraction is also common. The Christian approach is to condemn all forms of prejudice and intolerance, including homophobia. (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2358).

Sex and gender

Our pupils are girls. As a response to some entrenched and other rapidly changing socio-cultural norms about gender roles that they are exposed to, we encourage our students to explore the concepts of biological sex and cultural gender. In age-appropriate ways, we seek to present the category of 'woman' as an infinitely adaptable set of human beings, so they are empowered to individually and deliberately resist or adopt as many or as few of society's current ideas of what being a woman can include, as they need. We include discussion of gender transition within this framework.

Safeguarding and confidentiality

Staff will respond to questions in class in an open and factual way. If students ask to confide in a member of staff, we recognise that it may not be in the student's best interests for a member of staff to promise confidentiality and students are always encouraged to discuss the matter with their parents. However, a student may not always feel able to do this and confidential advice is available from the Chaplain and the School Doctor. Teachers are aware that effective RSE, which brings an understanding of what is and is not appropriate in a relationship, can lead to a disclosure of a safeguarding issue- all staff should follow school procedures and contact the DSL if required.

Working with parents

We are committed to working with parents and carers to ensure the best educational experience for their daughters. During the development and review of this policy, parents and carers will be consulted; feedback will be invited on this policy, as we welcome comments and questions from parents. This policy, for example, was sent to parents for their comments on 8th October 2021. Beyond these consultation periods, parents and carers are always warmly invited to contact the school directly with any queries or concerns.

Copies of this document and any associated schemes of work are available to parents on request. In accordance with Section 17A of the Education Act 1988 inserted by section 241 (2) of the Education Act 1993:

“If a parent of any learner requests that he/she may be wholly or partly excused from receiving sex education at the school, the learner shall, except in so far as such education comprised in the National Curriculum, be excused accordingly until the request is withdrawn”.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the sex education provided at the School, **except** for those parts included in the statutory National Curriculum Science.

National curriculum science

KEY STAGE 3

1. That fertilisation in humans is the fusion of a male and female cell.
2. About the physical and emotional changes that take place during adolescence. g) about the human reproductive system, including the menstrual cycle and fertilisation.
3. How a foetus develops in the uterus.

KEY STAGE 4

1. The way in which hormonal control occurs, including the effects of sex hormones. i) the defence mechanisms of the body.
2. How sex is determined in humans.

All of the above are statutory requirements and children may not be withdrawn from these lessons.

Relationships and Sex education is also delivered in Health Education and PSHEE (Thrive) tutorial lessons. The Health Education lessons are delivered by a specialist teacher to all students in years 7 – 9. At key Stage 4 and 5 RSE education is delivered by specialist teachers (Health Ed teacher, School nurse) and guest speakers.

Dissemination of the policy

The policy will be distributed to all members of staff involved in the teaching of Relationships and Sex Education. It will be circulated to the Senior Leadership Team. Copies are published on the school website and available for parents.

Quality assurance policy

The policy will be reviewed by those involved in the teaching of sex education and in the event of there being changes in:

- Government guidelines.
- Education Law.
- Whole School Policy.

Feedback is sought annually from staff and students and information collated and informs future planning of the Thrive Programme.

Please refer to the Health Education, Theology, Science and PSHEE handbooks. The Programme for Thrive is available from School.

This policy is reviewed also by the Governing body who are aware of their responsibilities.

Content headings for the Relationships and Sex Education Programme		
Topic	Year Taught	Subject
Menstruation	Years 7	HEd (7), Sci (10)
The roles of oestrogen and progesterone in the menstrual cycle and in the development of secondary sexual characteristics	Years 10-11	Science
Changes during puberty	Year 7 10	HEd (7), Sci (10)
Physical aspects of human reproduction	Years 7-9	Science
Pregnancy, development of foetus, birth	Years 7-9	Science
Function of the male and female reproductive systems and the fertilisation process	Years 10-11	Science
The role of the placenta in the nutrition of the developing embryo	Years 10-11	GCSE triple Science
Contraception	Years 9 / 10/ 12	Thrive
Self-image	Years 7 – 10	HEd, Thrive, Theology

Moral issues	Years 9 – 11	Thrive, Theology
Changing relationships and extra marital sex	Years 9, 10	Thrive
Peer group pressure and how to respond to it	Year 8 - 11	Thrive
Sexually transmitted infections	Years 9 – 10, 12	Thrive
Consideration of the moral and spiritual aspects of sex	Years 9 – 11	Theology
Knowledge and skills needed to establish control	Years 9 – Upper Sixth	Thrive, Theology
Use and analysis of information	Years 9 – Upper Sixth	Thrive, Theology, Sci
HIV and AIDS	Years 9 – 11	Thrive
Making informed choices about sex	Years 9 – 11, 12	Thrive, Theology
LGBTQ+	Years 9 – 11	Thrive, Theology
<i>Abortion/IVF</i>	<i>Year 9</i>	<i>Theology</i>
Teenage pregnancy /parenthood	Years 9	Thrive
Family planning	Years 9 - 11	Thrive, Theology

Legal aspects	Years 9, 10, 12	Thrive	
Sexual harassment	Year 9, 10, Sixth Form	Thrive	
Sexual stereotyping	Years 8/9, Years 10 & 11	Thrive (10/11)	
Abuse	Year 9,10	Thrive	
**Whole School Sex and Relationships Education Programme			
Contents	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form
Biology of reproduction	Sci		
Personal choices/decision making	HEd	Thrive, Theology	Thrive
Moral values of different cultures		Thrive, Theology	
Personal hygiene	HEd		
Legislation		Thrive	
Stereotyping		Thrive	

Marriage/family relationships	Theology	Thrive, Theology	
Family planning		Thrive Theology	Thrive
Abortion/IVF			Ethics
Sexually transmitted infections		Thrive	Thrive
HIV and AIDS		Thrive	Thrive