

LORETO GRAMMAR SCHOOL OMAGH



Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

‘Striving for Excellence – the LORETO way’

Updated: September 2024

RELATIONSHIPS & SEXUALITY POLICY

“The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor)

Principles/Rationale:

“Parents remain and always will remain the first and most important teachers of their children”

Pastoral Letter “Handing on the Faith in the Home” 1980

At Loreto Grammar School we recognise and fully respect that parents have the primary duty and right to be the first and principal educators of their children. The attitudes, beliefs and behaviour of young people in all their relationships are primarily formed and greatly influenced by their experiences within the family and the relationships they have with their parents/guardians. We aim to support and help parents/guardians to fulfil this responsibility, and to strengthen the partnership between home, school and the wider community. RSE in Loreto Grammar School is intended to supplement and complement what is taught in the home as a domestic church and we value the input and support of parents/guardians. Loreto Grammar School is an all-girl Catholic Grammar School committed to the education of the whole person (see Whole School Aims). We strive to empower our students to be responsible and reflective, capable of making informed decisions, inspired by gospel values and Christian morality. It is important that our young people are presented with values, beliefs and attitudes which reflect the true nature of human relationships and sexuality.

Relationships and Sexuality Education is a life-long process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and developing one’s beliefs, attitudes, values and morals about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. RSE seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality and how to develop the skills and values they need to initiate and sustain healthy, mature, balanced Christian relationships.

Sexuality is about more than its biological aspects. It concerns the innermost being of the human person. We believe sexuality is a gift from God. It is the drive within every person to give and receive love and affection. Our sexuality shapes and permeates all our relationships.

Provision:

RSE in Loreto Grammar School is taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner, in harmony with the moral, social and spiritual framework that reflects the belief and ethos of this Catholic School and in conformity with the moral and religious principles held by parents/guardians and the importance of stable, loving, personal relationships, parental responsibilities and family life, reflecting the School’s Pastoral Care and Child Protection Policies. The programme takes account of the students’ emotional,

intellectual and physical development and deals with the ethical, spiritual, social, biological and moral implications of the subject.

In Loreto Grammar School, Omagh, the Religious Education Department, in delivering Relationships and Sexuality Education, also satisfy the requirements of Learning for Life and Work at Key Stages 3 and 4. Other departments (Personal Development (P.D), Home Economics, Science and Local and Global Citizenship (LGC)) in covering their own Learning Areas will contribute to the RSE material delivered by R.E. The programme takes account of the diverse views of the secular world while holding fast to the Catholic vision of human sexuality and relationships.

It is intended that during KS3 students will achieve a stage appropriate knowledge and understanding of the content and begin to appreciate the issues pertaining to RSE. Progression and continuity happens at KS4 and KS5 so that students can reach a deeper understanding of more complex concepts and issues given their increased maturity and wider range of experiences.

This policy takes account of the Equality Act Regulations (NI) 2006, Every School a Good School, Together Towards Improvement, the Department of Education Circular 2013/2016 and the School's policies on Pastoral Care and Welfare, Child Protection and Safeguarding, Addressing Bullying (Type Behaviour), Social, Behavioural, Emotional Wellbeing (SBEW), Positive Behaviour Management, Internet, Community Relations Equality and Diversity (CRED), Drugs Education, Vetting Arrangements and is linked to the School Development Plan. The Diocese of Derry "Relationships and Sexuality Education – A Guidance Document for Post Primary Schools in N.I" March 2017, Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools DE 2017, Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI DHSSPS March 2016 and the Safeguarding Board NI App have also been consulted. This policy was shared with a sample of 100 randomly selected parents in September 2024 for consultation and amendments to be made accordingly.

Aims

The Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme aims to:

- Help young people to appreciate their uniqueness and dignity as children of God.
- Enable young people to understand and develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships, stay safe and develop a moral thinking and value system.
- Promote a Christian vision of sexuality and sexual health matters i.e. a vision that promotes unselfish love, respect and commitment.
- Help young people understand that sexuality is a gift from God that encompasses the whole person, body, mind, emotions and soul.

- Promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality, sexual health and one's relationships with others.
- Promote knowledge and understanding of, and respect for sexuality and human reproduction.
- Help young people to appreciate that marriage is a sacrament and that sexual intercourse is an expression of married love.
- Appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Promote an appreciation of the value and sanctity of human life and the wonder of life from the moment of conception.
- Encourage young people to make informed, responsible, moral decisions about their relationships and sexual health.
- Create a positive, safe learning environment which acknowledges and respects the rights, uniqueness, individuality and dignity of each pupil, regardless of difference.
- Enable young people to recognise potentially exploitative, dangerous, situations and relationships and teach them how to take preventative action.
- Link with previous learning.
- Help young people to keep themselves safer in a digital world.
- Ensure that students, at each stage of their development, have an understanding of and respect for the rights, equality, dignity and diversity of all.
- Educate students to live in a changing world so that they value and respect difference and engage positively with it.
- Develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours that enable them to value and respect difference and engage positively with it.

The areas addressed in the Key Stage 3 and 4 (and Post 16) programmes of RSE, tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of our young people are:

1. Growth and Development
2. Sexuality
3. Relationships
4. Marriage
5. Responsible Parenthood
6. Abortion and Sanctity of Life
7. Sexual orientation and gender identity
8. Dealing with homophobic language and bullying
9. Technology (sexting)
10. Child sexual exploitation
11. Sexual Abuse

- 12. Domestic Violence
- 13. Sexually Transmitted Diseases
- 14. Inappropriate behaviour and touch

Key Stage 3

Year 8 RSE

- In Religious Education, a 4-week unit on Self, Family Life, Puberty, Relationships and Influences will be delivered.

Year 9 RSE

- In Religious Education, a 3-week unit on feelings and emotions; hormones and moods; friendship; managing conflict in relationships and self; love and infatuation; peer pressure and choices; life in the womb; sanctity of life and the rights of the unborn.

Year 10 RSE

- In Religious Education, a 3-week unit on influences of social media on teenage relationships; beginning and ending relationships; effect of alcohol on teenage relationships; setting boundaries in romantic relationships and understanding consent.

Key Stage 4

Year 11 Religious Studies

- In Religious Studies, the students will have a 2-week unit on Consent and Healthy and Unhealthy relationships.

Year 12 Religious Studies

- In Religious Studies, the students will follow a full year's course on "*An Introduction to Christian Ethics*" which includes:
 1. The Meaning and Purpose of Sexual Relationships
 2. The role and importance of Celibacy
 3. Marriage as a Sacrament
 4. The benefits and challenges of Marriage
 5. Same-sex marriage and civil partnerships; parenthood
 6. Sex outside marriage
 7. Marital Breakdown, divorce and remarriage
 8. Alternatives to marriage
 9. Different types of Family

10. Abortion, Euthanasia and IVF

Key Stage 5

Year 13

In the Year 13 Religious Education Programme:

- Friendship, gossip and respect
- Unhealthy relationships and domestic abuse – Women’s Aid
- Respect for Life – Life Works
- Child Exploitation –Human Trafficking

Year 14 Religious Education

Students will cover the following topics:

1. Relationship with self, friendship and family
2. Consent
3. Impact of Drugs and Alcohol on Relationships
4. Pre-marital sex – consequences; effects of pornography and sexting
5. Pregnancy
6. Sexually transmitted diseases and contraception

Methodology: Teaching and Learning Approaches

Teaching methods in RSE are concerned with the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and skills which have implications for behaviour, and are tailored to the age, maturity and understanding of the young people. An open and facilitative teaching style and participative and experiential methodologies are essential and will involve the students actively in the process of their own learning. The teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats all students with due sensitivity and care.

Roles and Responsibilities:

RSE Co-ordinator/ Heads of R.E. and Junior R.E. Departments/ LLW/ Local and Global Citizenship/ PD/ Science/ Home Economics will:

- Devise the RSE Policy.
- Co-ordinate the development and delivery of all aspects of the programme.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of the programme in consultation with staff delivering the programme, upholding and ensuring that the programme is taught with due care to the Catholic Ethos of the school and to Catholic teaching on morality.
- Consult with students, teachers and parents and take into account feedback received.

- Source and provide relevant resources and support materials for teachers.
- Offer support on issues of concern to staff and parents.
- Organise staff training when appropriate.
- Liaise with outside agencies where appropriate.

The Board of Governors will:

- Examine and approve the RSE Policy.
- Ensure that the Policy reflects the Catholic Ethos of the School
- Review the policy.

The Principal and Senior Management Team will:

- Consult Governors, staff parents, students and relevant professionals.
- Ensure the implementation of the programme.
- Ensure that financial support is available for the delivery of the programme.
- Support staff responsible for teaching RSE and ensure opportunities for staff development and training.

Heads of other contributing Departments (P.D. Home Economics, Science and Local & Global Citizenship (LGC)) while required to meet the demands of their subject specifications will:

- Ensure the delivery of identified topics of the RSE programme in their subject area.
- Be mindful to promote the Catholic ethos of the School.
- Liaise with the RSE Co-ordinator and RSE Team regarding the timing of topics which contribute to the RSE Programme.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the specific topics which contribute to the RSE Programme in conjunction with staff and the RSE Co-ordinator.

Head of Special Educational needs and Learning Support Co-ordinator will:

- Ensure Individual Education Plans tailored to the needs of the individual child are disseminated to Staff.
- Provide relevant information to RSE Staff which will ensure that the needs of all pupils are met

Staff will:

- Be informed of the policy, procedures and programme of RSE.
- Deliver the programme as outlined in the policy and in line with the Catholic ethos of the School.
- Facilitate and support students' learning and employ an enquiry-based approach when exploring sensitive issues.

- Ensure that learning takes place in a safe, secure, respectful and inclusive space where students can express their feelings and opinions and participate confidently and freely without embarrassment, judgement or ridicule from peers.
- Be sensitive and supportive to the needs of students, to their personal circumstances and cultural background.
- Build secure, trusting, respectful relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Remain present in the classroom with outside speakers/agencies.

Students will:

- Be engaged in interactive learning experiences.
- Be respectful of other students' feelings, experiences and situations.
- Evaluate the RSE Unit.
- Contribute to the evaluation and review of RSE programme and activities.

Parents / Guardians will:

- Be able to view the RSE Policy at the School on request.
- Be enabled to meet with the R.E. Team/RSE Co-ordinator to discuss any issues/concerns in relation to Relationships and Sexuality Education.

Induction for Parents

Information will be provided for parents about the content and timing of the RSE programme in the following ways:

- An RSE Information Leaflet will be made available for all students.
- The RSE Policy will be available upon request for parents/guardians.

Guiding Principles

1. The Role of the Family

We believe men and women should pledge their love for each other in a lifelong mutual commitment and it is within marriage that couples should seek to bring children into the world. We promote this idea of the Christian family while remaining sensitive to, and being aware of the different types of family backgrounds from which our students come. Sex is a God-given gift that enables married couples to express and deepen their love for each other, a love that should unite the couple as well as be open to the gift of new life. The ideals of respect and dignity for every person regardless of their race, creed or sexual orientation are to be recognized.

2. Sacredness of Life

We believe that from the moment of conception the embryo is a human being and must be recognized as having the rights of a person. The most fundamental right for every human being is the right to life. This belief is one of the foundation stones on which the RSE programme is built. The value and sacredness of life will be actively promoted. This will influence teaching on abortion and casual sex.

3. Confidentiality and Child Protection Issues

The students' right to privacy will be respected at all times by both the teacher and all other students in the class. Teachers cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Students will be made aware that a teacher has a moral and legal responsibility to inform the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or the Principal, if a student discloses information that suggests that she is at risk of, or is actually suffering from any kind of abuse e.g. emotional, physical, sexual, or neglect, Exploitation including Child Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Violence and Abuse. Staff will act in accordance with the School's Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

4. Special Educational Needs

In line with the Special Educational Needs Policy, the teacher will plan, adapt and teach RSE according to the Individual Education Plan of the individual child. Materials will be adapted to meet the SEN of individual students and, where necessary, the particular needs of groups of students.

5. Answering pupils' questions

We have confidence in the professional judgement and skill of our teachers in dealing with awkward questions that may arise during the course of class discussions. The use of proper biological terms will be encouraged in the delivery of RSE. Teachers will point out to students that the use of slang words or offensive words often indicates embarrassment, the lack of knowledge and/or a lack of respect for self and others. While it is important to create an environment in which students can discuss issues openly, teachers may not be able to answer all questions about issues and can set appropriate limits. Teachers will use their professional judgement, guided by the age of the students, the RSE Programme and the RSE policy.

6. Use of visitors and other resources

Loreto Grammar School encourages the involvement of outside agencies to complement the delivery of RSE where applicable. There will be adequate preparation and appropriate follow-up in relation to guest speakers. The RSE Co-ordinator and teachers involved in the delivery of RSE will ensure that resource materials obtained from other agencies and presentations by outside speakers are in harmony with the ethos of the school. The RSE teacher should remain in the classroom whilst the speaker is delivering the subject matter.

7. Withdrawal from RSE

Whilst RSE is a statutory component of the NI Curriculum, parents or carers have a right to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes. The school will consider in consultation with parents how we can support those who chose to withdraw their child from all or part of RSE.

Parents/ Guardians can request to withdraw their daughter if she is under the age of 16 but if she is 16 or over, the student will be consulted about this request and a meeting can be arranged.

Evaluation:

The aims of the RSE programme as listed in this policy will be at the forefront of any monitoring and evaluation to ascertain if they are being achieved. This will be carried out through the creation of evaluations to assess the effectiveness of some lessons, regarding students' knowledge of the attitudes to particular issues and topics. Evidence of students' learning will include:

- Verbal feedback from teachers, students and parents
- Each student will complete an evaluation form at the end of the RSE Unit which will form part of the review process.
- Teachers will be asked to provide the R.S.E. Co-ordinator and R.E. Department and with an overview of comments/issues raised during the delivery of the Programme. These will be taken into account in future planning.

Date of implementation: February 2003

Reviewed: September 2024