

Diocese of Salford
Department for Formation

Office for Education



DIOCESE OF SALFORD

A Rationale for
Personal Relationships and Sex Education
in Catholic Schools

A Rationale for Personal Relationships and Sex Education

“God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”¹

Formed in the image and likeness of their Creator, all human beings have within them the potential for life in all of its beauty and fullness, that longing for integrity and wholeness finds its aspiration and its fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ. Personal Relationships and Sex Education offers an excellent opportunity to express our fundamental belief that all aspects of life have the capacity to lead us to God. The values contained in Sex and Personal Relationships Education are worthy of serious study and integration across all curriculum areas².

We are involved in Personal Relationships and Sex Education precisely because of our Catholic beliefs about God and about the human person: God is a community.

“Basically, education for authentic love, authentic only if it becomes kind, well-disposed-love, involves accepting the person who is loved and considering his or her good as one’s own; hence this implies educating in right relationships with others. Children, adolescents and young people should be taught how to enter into healthy relationships with God, with their parents, their brothers and sisters, with their companions of the same or the opposite sex, and with adults.”³

Government initiatives are to be found in the DfEE ‘Sex and Relationship Education Guidance’ and the QCA guidance on ‘Personal, Social and Health Education’.⁴ Our response to these initiatives must be both positive and prudent, guided by our Catholic vision of what it means to be human and our claims to educate the whole person. The Catholic Church and, therefore, the schools which it embraces, holds foundational beliefs in God as the giver of life and in the human being as the pinnacle of God’s creation. It further holds that all authentic human aspirations and values have their origin and their fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ. As a result the Catholic Church has always emphasised that its aim is the education of the whole person.

¹ Genesis Chapter 1, Verse 27 and Mark Chapter 10, Verse 6.

² See Gravissimum Educationis: paragraph 7, 1965.

³ The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: para.53, 1995.

⁴ See Education Act (No. 2) 1986 Sections 18, 19 & 46. Education Act 1996, amended in LSC Act 2000, section 403 1A. National Framework document for PSHE available from QCA; Sex and Relationships Education Guidance DfEE 2000, Introduction paragraph 4.

Laying the Foundations for Education in Personal Relationships and Sexuality⁵

1. A Contemporary Programme

Ideally schools will help pupils to have a properly formed conscience to enable them to make right judgements, and to take the right actions in the many and varied situations in which they may find themselves, which take into account the values of the family, church and cultures to which they belong. As individuals they will assume increasing responsibility for managing their own lifestyles. This will involve them making choices about lifestyle and acting on those decisions. This is one of the reasons why within Catholic schools there is a real need to give gradual and positive education about personal relationships and sex in a developmental programme.

2. A Whole Person Approach

*A programme cannot be reduced to mechanical and biological functions. There must first be an acceptance of pupils as sexual beings; "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."⁶ Catholic schools have the responsibility to ensure that the information given to pupils is received in the context of *the teachings of the Catholic Church* and, therefore, based on sound moral principles. *Young people need to be brought to an appreciation of the true potential of their lives when they are lived in love, selflessness and fidelity to God who is its source, as revealed by Jesus Christ.**

3. A Whole School Approach

The experience of life in school, through both the formal and the wider curriculum, should promote the common set of values which are taught by the Catholic Church and upon which the personal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance⁷ can be built. Pupils are accepted whatever their background. They will have different maturation rates and different levels of sexual awareness. The pressures on them, from society and the media, often subliminal, cannot be underestimated. The school must be ready to

⁵ The following 3 paragraphs, with additions in *italics*, are extracted from the Bishops' Conference Low Week Meeting 1987.

⁶ Educational Guidance in Human Love, CTS, 1983.

⁷ Four virtues play a pivotal role and accordingly are called "cardinal". They are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. *Prudence* is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it. *Justice* is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbour. *Fortitude* is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. *Temperance* is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.

accompany them on their journey to adulthood, modelling for them and enabling them to become capable of whole and wholesome relationships, and discerning their calling. *Nothing that is taught in schools should be divorced from these values.* Consequently, while a senior member of staff should be responsible for the development and co-ordination of the necessary programmes, it should also be seen as a responsibility shared by the whole staff, with the whole range of the curriculum contributing to the formation of right moral attitudes in our children and young people.

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and Carers

Both the Church and the State recognise that “parents are the first and best educators of their children”⁸; parents and carers play a central role and the school works in partnership with them.⁹ They have a right to withdraw their children from personal relationships and sex education¹⁰. There will be information given to parents about the programmes and resources which will be used. Parents will be encouraged to talk to their children about all aspects of this subject.

Governors

Governors have the responsibility of ensuring that a personal relationships and sex policy exists, that it is in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church, and that there has been consultation with parents and teachers. They will ensure that the programme is made available for parents to examine and that parents are made aware of their right to withdraw their children. Governors will ensure that the programme, the resources and all wider areas of the school life affected are monitored and evaluated.¹¹

Staff

All adult members of the school community are role models and educators in this dimension of pupils’ education. Every person contributes to a Catholic school’s programme of personal relationships and sex education. All should be briefed on the key

⁸ Gravissimum Educationis: paragraph 7, 1965.

⁹ Circular 5/94 – Sex Education in Schools, paragraph 7. Sex and Relationships Education Guidance DfEE 2000, Section 5. The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, Chapters 4 & 8. Education in Sexuality, CES, 1994.

¹⁰ The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, paragraph 120, 1995.

¹¹ See Sex and Relationship Education Guidance, DfEE, 2000.

features and principles of the teaching of the Catholic Church and should be asked to show respect for these when working with pupils. They are supported by named members of staff who, together with the headteacher, have specific responsibility for this area of the curriculum delegated to them by the Governing Body. Opportunities for learning, which will occur in all areas of the curriculum, will be brought together in a specific Personal Relationships and Sex Education programme adapted to the age and development of pupils.

GUIDANCE

All members of staff will be expected to support the principles of the programme and its implementation.

Good management of the Programme will require clear identification of the following:

Who is to teach the programme? The following points should be considered:

The suitability of individual members of staff.

Staff training - to provide guidance about the teaching of the Catholic Church and to address such questions as confidentiality, maintaining boundaries and disclosures.

Guidance on the use of and the monitoring of outside speakers and agencies.

Where is it in the curriculum?

In Religious Education, Science, PSHE, and Citizenship.

For the wider picture a regular whole curriculum audit and on-going monitoring is required.

Scheme of Work (including an 'Objectives' grid)

Based on a clear set of Aims.

Differentiation within the programme in order to address the different and changing needs of our children and young people.

Monitoring and Review

A clear process should be in place.

Appendix

A Summary of Catholic Teaching Concerning Marriage and Sexuality and its delivery in Catholic Schools

Introduction

This short document has been written in response to the needs of School Governors, Catholic Teachers, Teachers who are not Catholics and Local Authorities.

It is a very simple summary of Catholic teaching concerning Marriage and Sexuality together with some guidelines for passing on that teaching. The document is intended to confirm the faith of Catholic teachers, to offer guidance to non-Catholic teachers and to inform Local Authorities about the basics of Catholic teaching in an area which is of concern to us all.

This document is an important tool for the Governors and Staff of Catholic Schools. It is envisaged that in the evaluation or production of policies, the assessment of resources and the delivery of lessons which involve any aspect of Catholic teaching concerning marriage and sexuality, careful account will be taken of the contents of this document.

There are two important elements to keep in mind when considering the subjects of marriage and sexuality in a Catholic school. The first is that it is **parents** who are the “first teachers of their child in the ways of faith” (*The Rite of Baptism*). The second is that teaching, learning and discussion should always be conducted in the context of loving, committed and permanent relationships. The ‘facts of life’ should always be given in a ‘moral’ context because sexual activity always has moral consequences.

The numbers at the end of each section are references to paragraphs in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)*, first published in 1992. The Catechism explains the teaching of the Catholic Church in reference to Scripture and Tradition in a way not possible in this summary. Those with the primary responsibility of evaluating or producing policies, assessing resources or delivering lessons which involve any aspect of Catholic teaching concerning marriage and sexuality would certainly need to refer to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which is “a sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine” (*Pope Benedict XVI, ‘Motu proprio’ for approval and publication of the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2005*).

Guidelines and principles

Catholic teaching on marriage and human sexuality is founded on the dignity of the human person, the universal call to holiness and the task of building up society. It is not simply about imparting information but about growth. Such growth includes developing a properly formed conscience, a life of chastity, purity of heart and mind, and the courage to love God the Father’s plan for human sexuality. All this must be formed by, and ordered to, the love of God and neighbour as revealed by Jesus Christ our crucified and risen Saviour. In short, any formation in marriage and human sexuality which takes place in school must be permeated by the Catholic ethos of the school.

(See CCC paragraphs 1700 ff, 2012 ff, 2344, 1776-1802, 2331-2391, 1822-1829.)

The Church teaches that the gifts of human sexuality and of marriage are sacred. It strives to ensure that everyone is able to give the reverent and loving response called for by these gifts from God. Formation in marriage and human sexuality must be age-appropriate, positive, prudent, clear and delicate. Objectively, it must never offend against modesty. Subjectively, it must never offend someone's own delicacy or sense of privacy. Above all, the formation must always be done in reference to the Word of God revealed through Scripture (the books of the Bible) and Tradition (the constant teaching of the Church), and safeguarded by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church. *(See CCC paragraphs 2331-2333, 2524, 74-95.)*

Because each child is a unique and unrepeatable person made in the image of God, his or her dignity demands an individual formation in which parents play the primary role. Because of their particular love for each child and because of the grace bestowed upon them through the sacrament of marriage, parents are the essential, original and primary teachers of the truth about marriage and human sexuality for their children. The family is the first school of life. This vocation of parents cannot be delegated to others or usurped by others except in cases of physical or psychological impossibility. Given the broken nature of so many relationships the responsibility of teachers and those who care for children is greatly increased. All of Christ's faithful in the Diocese of Salford are called to witness to the authenticity of the Church's teachings in their state of life and to assist parents, teachers and young people through ardent prayer and the exercise of the spiritual gifts. *(See CCC paragraphs 221-2231.)*

Because of original sin, the acceptance and directing of one's sexuality is a very difficult struggle, even with a solid moral formation. Chastity is possible because the Holy Spirit makes the Cross of Christ fruitful in our lives. Thus, a dependence on the Holy Spirit must characterise this education. Human effort without the Holy Spirit is never sufficient.

(See CCC paragraphs 1996-2003.)

Fundamental truths

The first and last point of reference is always Jesus Christ Himself who is the way, the truth and the life. Formation in marriage and human sexuality has to reveal in all honesty and clarity both the joy and the demands of the way of Christ. This principle encompasses the following fundamental truths:

(See CCC paragraphs 1691-1698.)

God created man and woman in His image.

God, who is revealed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is love and is a mystery of personal loving communion. By creating the human race in his own image, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion.

(See CCC paragraphs 355-379.)

Man and woman abused their freedom by original sin.

With the sin of our first parents, the grace of original justice and holiness was lost. As a break with God the first sin had for its first consequence the rupture of the original communion of man and woman. From this time on, their relations were distorted by distrust, domination and lust.

(See CCC paragraphs 385-412.)

Christ redeemed human sexuality.

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of body and soul. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to love and to procreate, and the ability to form bonds of communion with others. Because Jesus came to restore all of creation to

the purity of its origins, sexuality has also been redeemed by Christ. In their following of Christ, Christians surrender their sexuality to the grace of redemption.

(See CCC paragraphs 2332, 1730-1742, 2331-2359.)

All the baptised are called to chastity.

All Christ's faithful are called to lead a chaste life in keeping with their particular states of life. The full meaning of the sacredness and goodness of marriage and human sexuality is only revealed and safeguarded when it is regulated by the virtue of chastity. Chastity is the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to live self-giving, free from any form of self-centred slavery. A full understanding of this vocation leads to the realisation that masturbation, fornication, pornography and homosexual practices are gravely contrary to chastity.

(See CCC paragraphs 2352-2354, 2360-2400.)

Sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of a man and woman.

In marriage the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion. Marriage bonds between baptised persons are sanctified by the sacrament. The spouses' union achieves the twofold end of marriage: the good of the spouses themselves and the transmission of life. These two meanings or values of marriage cannot be separated without altering the couple's spiritual life and compromising the goods of marriage and the future of the family. The conjugal love of a man and a woman thus stands under the twofold obligation of fidelity and fecundity. A full understanding of this vocation leads to the realisation that contraception, direct sterilization, adultery, divorce, polygamy and co-habitation are grave offences against the dignity of marriage.

(See CCC paragraphs 2370, 2380, 2384, 2397, 2390.)

Sexuality becomes a special sign of God's Kingdom when the goods of marriage are renounced out of devotion to Christ.

Christ's work of redemption makes the life of virginity or consecrated celibacy for the

sake of the Kingdom a real possibility. Through renouncing the goods of marriage out of devotion to Christ, Christians are enabled to give themselves to God alone with an undivided heart in a remarkable manner. *(See CCC paragraph 2349.)*

Suggested Resources

Catechism of the Catholic Church, (1994) 2004

‘The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality’, CTS 1995

‘Educational Guidance in Human Love’, CTS 1983

‘Gravissimum Educationis, Second Vatican Council 1965

Sex and Relationships Education Guidance, DfEE 2000

‘Relationships & Moral Education in the Catholic School – Guide for Parents’, SCES

‘Relationships & Moral Education Audit of Current Practice (Secondary School), SCES

Legal Factsheet, Archdiocese of Birmingham 2005

Model Policy for Sex and Relationship Education, Archdiocese of Birmingham 2005

‘All That I Am’ programme, Archdiocese of Birmingham 2005

‘Theology of the Body for Teens’, Ascension Press 2007

‘Sex and Relationships Education’, Just Youth 2003

‘LIFE’ – Education Officers. lifecharity.org.uk

‘Foundations for a Good Life’, Marriage Care 2004

‘A Journey in Love’ Volume 2, McCrimmons 2008

‘Alive to the World’ Books 6&7, Alliance for the Family September 2008

‘Alive to the World’ Books 8-11, Alliance for the Family September 2009

‘Alive to the World’ Books 6&7, Alliance for the Family September 2008

‘Sex Education or Indoctrination’, Valerie Riches, Family Education Trust 2004

Acknowledgement

The Diocese of Salford is grateful to those teachers, parents, governors, advisers and members of the Department for Formation and the Department for Vocation who have contributed to the production of this important document.

Published by the Diocese of Salford Department for Formation.

Enquiries to:

Canon Anthony McBride (Episcopal Vicar),

Cathedral House, 250 Chapel Street, Salford M3 5LL.

Telephone: 0160-834 0333. E-mail: cathedral@salforddiocese.org