



ST DOMINIC'S
Sixth Form College

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy

St Dominic's is a Roman Catholic Sixth Form College committed to the personal and spiritual growth of all its members based on Christian values, academic excellence and high-quality pastoral care.

"You call me Master and Lord, and rightly, so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done for you. In all truth, I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him." (John, 13:13-16)

These verses, from John's Gospel, explain very clearly our Mission as a Roman Catholic Sixth Form College. As servants of Christ, we assert the primacy of the spiritual and moral life, the dignity of the person, the importance of community, the pursuit of academic excellence and our commitment to caring, social justice and the common good as the visible fruits of the faith. The Gospel is at the heart of the work of the College and we serve one another in the knowledge that we only have one teacher, Jesus He whom we call the Christ.

Consultation process

This policy was finalised following consultation with:

- The Student Executive Team
- Student body
- The Governors
- Parents
- SLT, Tutors, Directors of Learning and the Core RE Team
- Academic Board

Dissemination of the Policy

The policy will be given to all relevant stakeholders and placed on the College website.

Defining RSE

The duties on schools in the area of RSE are set out in legislation. The DfE guidance states that students need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. RSE is about the development of this knowledge and the students' understanding of themselves as sexual beings, about what it means to be fully human, called to live in right relationships with themselves and others and being enabled to make moral decisions in conscience.

While the 'S' in RSE is important, the 'R' is no less so. RSE provides the College with a framework to engage with our students in open and honest conversations about relationships, while remaining true to Catholic teaching.

RSE in Years 12 and 13 should build on what students have learned throughout their time in education, enabling them to know what a healthy relationship looks like, what makes a good friend, a good colleague and a successful marriage or other committed relationship. It should also build on what they know about

contraception, developing intimate relationships and resisting (and not applying) pressure to have sex. With the development of this knowledge students will be enabled to make decisions, based on good judgements and will be prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of young adult life.

Rationale

The statutory requirements of RSE do not apply to sixth form colleges but at St Dominic's we believe that, because of our Christian beliefs about God and the human person, it is important that we act as if they *did* apply. 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 institution.

At the heart of the Christian life is the Trinity; Father, Son and Spirit in communion, united in a loving relationship and embracing all people and all creation. As a consequence of the Christian belief that we are made in the image and likeness of God, gender and sexuality are seen as God's gift, reflect God's beauty, and share in the divine creativity.

A holistic approach to RSE will be adopted. Three aspects of RSE – attitudes and values, knowledge and understanding and personal and social skills, will be provided in the following inter-related ways:

- the whole school / ethos dimension;
- a cross-curricular dimension
- the tutorial programme
- Core RE (into which relationships and sex education will be embedded)

RSE is centred on Christ's vision of being human as good news and will be positive and prudent, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks involved to be understood and appreciated. RSE will emphasise the central importance of marriage and the family, whilst acknowledging that all students have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from and their views heard. Relationships play a major part in wellbeing and mental health. RSE at St. Dominic's is seen as being part of the College's culture which regards emotional wellbeing and mental health as a whole-College responsibility, where everyone has a part to play.

Values, Virtues and Themes:

Our programme enshrines Catholic values relating to the importance of stable relationships, marriage and family life. It also promotes 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. The following virtues will be explicitly discussed, explored and promoted: faithfulness, fruitfulness, chastity, integrity, prudence, mercy and compassion.

The programme will incorporate the following three themes:

- **Created and loved by God** (this explores the individual). The Christian imperative to love self, made in the image and likeness of God, shows an understanding of the importance of valuing and understanding oneself as the basis for personal relationships.
- **Created to love others** (this explores an individual's relationships with others). **God is love.** We are created out of love and for love. The command to love is the basis of all Christian morality.
- **Created to live in community** – local, national & global (this explores the individual's relationships with the wider world). Human beings are relational by nature and live in the wider community. Through our exchange with others, our mutual service and through dialogue, we attempt to proclaim and extend the Kingdom of God for the good of individuals and the good of society.

Objectives of RSE at St Dominic's:

1. To develop the following attitudes and virtues:

- reverence for the gift of human sexuality and fertility;
- respect for the dignity of every human being – in their own person and in the person of others;
- joy in the goodness of the created world and our own embodied existence;
- responsibility for their own actions and a recognition of the impact of these on others;
- recognising and valuing their own sexual identity and that of others;
- celebrating the gift of life-long, self-giving love;
- recognising the importance of marriage and family life;
- fidelity in relationships.

2. To develop the following personal and social skills:

- making sound judgements and good choices which have integrity, and which are respectful of the individual's commitments;
- loving and being loved, and the ability to form friendships and loving, stable relationships free from exploitation, abuse and bullying;
- managing emotions within relationships, and when relationships break down, with confidence, sensitivity and dignity;
- managing conflict positively, recognising the value of difference;
- cultivating humility, mercy and compassion, learning to forgive and be forgiven;
- developing self-esteem and confidence, demonstrating self-respect and empathy for others;
- building resilience and the ability to resist unwanted pressures, recognising the influence and impact of the media, internet and peer groups and so developing the ability to assess pressures and respond appropriately;
- being patient, delaying gratification and learning to recognise the appropriate stages in the development of relationships, and how to love chastely;
- assessing risks and managing behaviours in order to minimise the risk to health and personal integrity.

3. To know and understand:

- the Church's teaching on relationships and the nature and meaning of sexual love;
- the Church's teaching on marriage and the importance of marriage and family life;
- the centrality and importance of virtue in guiding human living and loving;
- the facts about human reproduction, how love is expressed sexually and how sexual love plays an essential and sacred role in procreation;
- how to manage fertility in a way which is compatible with our students' stage in life, their own values and commitments, including an understanding of the difference between natural family planning and artificial contraception;
- how to keep themselves safe from sexually transmitted infections and how to avoid unintended pregnancy, including where to go for advice.

Inclusion and learning to suit the needs of all students

We will ensure RSE is sensitive to the different needs of individual students in respect to students' different abilities, levels of maturity and personal circumstances (for example, their own sexual orientation, faith or culture) and is taught in a way that does not subject students to discrimination.

Teaching strategies

Teaching strategies will include:

- establishing ground rules
- small group and whole class discussion
- reflection

- pair and group work
- drawings
- values clarification

A Balanced Curriculum

Whilst promoting Catholic values and virtues and teaching in accordance with the laws of the Church, we will ensure that students are offered a balanced programme. Students will also receive clear information on the law pertaining to RSE (e.g. forced marriage, female genital mutilation, abortion, the age of consent and legislation relating to equality). Knowing about facts and enabling young people to explore differing viewpoints is not the same as promoting behaviour and is not incompatible with our College's promotion of Catholic teaching. We will ensure that students have access to the learning they need to stay safe, healthy and understand their rights as individuals and make informed choices.

All RSE will respect the Church's teaching on morals and ethics subject to Pope Benedict's XVI encouragement to 'not yield to the temptation of relativism'. It will be sensitive to varying opinions on moral matters whilst ensuring not to 'lose its way in the shifting sands of widespread scepticism'. (Pope John Paul II. 'Fides Et Ratio' 1980)

'[Some people] try to give the impression that everything is relative: even the truths of faith would depend on the human situation on human evaluation. We must not yield to the temptation of relativism or of a subjectivist and selective interpretation of sacred scripture. Only the whole truth can open us to adherence to Christ, dead and risen for our salvation.' (Pope Benedict XVI; Warsaw Pilsudski Square 2006)

We recognise that in class discussions, some of our students will put forward the view that truth and morality are subjective. Others will be committed to a belief in God and will disagree, arguing that what is right and true never changes. Our aim is to give our students the skills to "disagree well". Debate today, especially on social media, increasingly divides people into two camps where opponents are seen as the enemy. This means, that, more than ever, learning to respect others as *people* while questioning/disagreeing with their viewpoint, is a vital life skill for young people to acquire.

Roles and Responsibilities related to RSE

Governors finalise the RSE policy, in consultation with parents and teachers and ensure that the policy is available to all stakeholders. It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to ensure that the policy is in accordance with other whole College policies.

The Principal takes overall delegated responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for liaison with the Governing Body, parents, the Diocesan Service and any other appropriate agency.

The Head of Core RE has the immediate overview of the RSE policy and, in conjunction with the Principal, ensures that the policy remains current and in line with Catholic teaching.

Students' questions

The Governors want to promote a healthy, positive atmosphere in which RSE can take place. They want to ensure that students can ask questions freely, be confident that their questions will be answered and be sure that they will be free from bullying or harassment from their peers.

Controversial or sensitive issues

There will always be sensitive or controversial issues in the field of RSE. These may be a matter of maturity, of personal involvement or the experience of students, of disagreement with the official teaching of the Church, of illegal activity or other doubtful or harmful activity. The Governors believe that students are best educated, protected from harm and exploitation by discussing such issues openly within the context of the Core RE and tutorial programmes. The use of ground rules, negotiated between staff delivering the programmes and

students, will help to create a supportive climate for discussion. Some questions may raise issues which it would not be appropriate for teachers to answer during ordinary class time, e.g., where a student's questions hint at abuse, is deliberately tendentious or is of a personal nature.

Supporting students who are at risk

Students will need to feel safe and secure in the environment in which RSE takes place. Effective RSE will provide opportunities for discussion of what is and is not appropriate in relationships. Such discussion may well lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. Teachers and tutors will need to be aware of the needs of their students and not let any fears and worries go unnoticed. Where a member of staff suspects that a student is a victim of or is at risk of abuse, they are required to follow the College's safeguarding policy and immediately inform the designated senior members of staff responsible.

Confidentiality and Advice

All governors, staff, parents and students will be made aware of this policy, particularly as it relates to issues of advice and confidentiality. All lessons in all subjects will have the best interests of students at heart, enabling them to grow in knowledge and understanding of relationships and sex.

Students will be encouraged to talk to their parents/carers about the issues which are discussed as part of the tutorial and Core RE programmes. All staff will always help students facing personal difficulties, they will explain to students that they cannot offer unconditional confidentiality, in matters which are illegal or abusive for instance. They will explain that in such circumstances they would have to inform others, e.g. parents and the designated staff responsible in the first instance for safeguarding, but that the students would always be informed first that such action was going to be taken.

Originator: Principal
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