



Relationship and Sex Education Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors: June 2025

School Mission Statement

“To create and sustain, with God’s help, a learning, caring and serving community where all people are valued for who they are and who they may become in the light of Jesus Christ.”

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

What is Relationships and Sex Education (RSE)?

RSE gives students opportunities, at a time when they are becoming sexually aware, to learn about, identify, and develop healthy, respectful, loving, and morally responsible relationships of all kinds.

Context

This new RSE policy is based on St. Bede’s 2017 RSE policy. It has been written, reviewed and revised by a Working Group of staff, and is being presented for consultation to students, parents, staff, and governors. It is informed and guided by a range of documents, the most notable being:

- the statutory guidance for *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education* (DfE 2019)
- the Church of England’s teaching document *Living in Love and Faith* (2020)
- Pope Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (“The Joy of Love”) (2016)
- the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales’ document, *Learning to Love* (2017)
- the *Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia’s RSE Guidance and Principles* (2019)

Rationale - Why do we teach Relationships and Sex Education?

In the very beginning God, who in the mystery of the Trinity is a relationship of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, created humans “in His image” to share in this love and to live together in relationships of love.¹ These relationships were soon spoiled, so God sent us His Son to be a light to overcome our darkness, and to give us an abundant new life.² Christ’s death restored us through his self-giving, sacrificial love, and his life was a demonstration of the Gospel values he came to teach: love, mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation, compassion, and service. As an Inter-Church School, we place Relationships and Sex Education within this Christian context as part of a holistic approach which seeks to form as well as inform our students in loving, healthy, happy and fulfilled relationships in preparation for adult life.³ They will be enabled to become deeply aware of the importance of Gospel values in their own lives, and to consider the ways these values might be applied in the complex, confusing, and changing reality of everyday life.⁴ Through Relationships and Sex Education we hope to fulfil our mission statement by affirming our students in their God-given dignity, and offering them a vision of who they may become in the light of Christ. The importance of this mission is made clear in the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales’ teaching document *Learning to Love*: “Without providing an education in this area, we leave many young people vulnerable to receiving their education second-hand, and often from sources which damage them and their capacity to love.”⁵ The school will always deliver RSE in partnership with parents and carers, who are the first educators of their children.⁶

How will RSE be taught?

RSE at St. Bede's will reflect the Christian and Inter Church character of our school.

Our starting point for teaching RSE is "Sacred Scripture, the source of God's will revealed in His inspired Word"⁷ which teaches us the sacred dignity of the human person created in the image of God:

*God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*
Genesis 1:27,28

This sacred dignity is served by the self-giving, sacrificial love modelled by Jesus Christ in his life and death, and illustrated in his teachings:

Love your neighbour as yourself.
Matthew 22:39

And so from God's Word we have the foundation upon which all RSE at St. Bede's rests: dignity and love. These revealed teachings, interpreted in the light of tradition and reason, are both our essential content and method: they form the basis of *what* we teach in RSE, and *how* we teach it. We will clearly and sensitively teach how marriage is, 'a vocation to holiness, through which men and women share in the love and creative purpose of God,' as stated in the Church of England's 1958 Lambeth Conference.⁸ And while there is a diversity of Christian opinion around marriage and sex, "our faith calls upon us to consider marriage as the only proper state in which the sexual expression of love truly reflects its divine purpose."⁹ We cannot promote any other view. That being said, the language of 'promotion' is unhelpful in an Inter Church setting where there is such a diversity of opinion within and between our church traditions. In RSE we will not promote *any* one Christian view, but present a diversity of Christian beliefs to our students for discussion, reflection, and study. As Pope Francis stated in *Amoris Laetitia*, "We do not have to control the other person, to follow their every step lest they escape our grip. Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything."¹⁰ We hope to demonstrate this love as educators when we teach RSE. We do this so that all students, regardless of their opinion, family background, identity, orientation, or faith, can hear a message of how to love based on everyone's God-given dignity, and the importance of self-giving and sacrifice to a fulfilled life. And wherever it is appropriate, opportunities will be given to students to appreciate the importance of Gospel values in relationships: forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation, compassion, and service so that they might grow in the light of Christ.¹¹ These are what we will promote: not a particular Church's teaching, but the principles and values that all Christians share, and that everyone can receive.

RSE will be taught within PSHCE, Theology, and Science lessons across all year groups, age-appropriately. However, all members of staff will have cognisance of this policy as issues relating to RSE can be raised at any time by students, whether it's in other lessons, in tutor time, the chaplaincy, or in conversations outside of the classroom. RSE, then, becomes part of a wider education offered by St. Bede's, closely related to our Christian ethos.

Close liaison with the SENCO will be maintained in order to ensure the availability of appropriate resources and support for students with special needs.

RSE will be inclusive and pastoral. Research strongly suggests that the majority of our LGBTQ+ students regularly encounter homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language and behaviour, within school and in wider society. They live in a heteronormative world in which, because of something they do not choose, they are often caused to feel different, alone and confused. The prejudice and discrimination they face can often lead to poor mental health, with self-harm and suicidal thoughts being very high for these students compared to the average student. It is important, then, that RSE is pastoral, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all students and staff. In order to do this staff should challenge homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language whenever they encounter it, along with other

prejudicial and hurtful language. This may be in the form of questioning word choices, linking this type of language to other prejudicial language (e.g. racist slurs), explaining the emotional impact for people on hearing that language, or referring to our school prayer and mission statement, where we use our words to be 'loving and understanding' and aim to 'value everyone for who they are'. Comments and questions, when inappropriate or undermining, can be as damaging as slurs, so should be challenged in the same way. When teaching RSE – and subjects in general – staff will strive for non-gendered language and inclusive, diverse representation so that all students feel recognised and valued regardless of their identity or characteristics. RSE will educate students both of the harm caused by hate speech, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, and the dangers of committing hate crime if intolerance flourishes into adulthood and the wider world. Ultimately, RSE is a pastoral endeavour, and concerns the wellbeing of all our students, none of whom we wish to feel abandoned or unsupported especially as they navigate potentially confusing and complex feelings and experiences.

RSE will sometimes use outside agencies to deliver RSE. In order to incorporate the full spectrum of expertise in our RSE provision, it may at times be desirable, as appropriate, to involve outside agencies. These agencies will be in sympathy with the school's approach to RSE, and their use discussed with the Headteacher or member of SLT who has oversight of RSE. Such visitors will never work alone in a class and there will always be a clear written agreement beforehand of what is expected of them.

RSE will follow the school's Confidentiality and Safeguarding policies. In our school, we have a clear and explicit confidentiality policy, which is shared with staff, students and parents/carers:

- Staff are unable to offer absolute confidentiality.
- We will reassure young people that staff will act in their best interests and that this may involve sharing information when the young person is at risk of harm.
- Young people will be told if information is to be shared (unless the young person is very young or has significant special needs) and will be offered appropriate support.

Professionals, such as school nurses and youth workers, are bound by their professional codes of conduct when offering advice and guidance to individual pupils in a school-based health service such as a "drop-in centre". This often involves offering a greater level of confidentiality to young people than school staff may give. However, in a classroom or other teaching situations when they are contributing to our planned RSE programme, they will follow the school's confidentiality policy. Health professional and youth workers will ensure that young people are aware of this when beginning work with them.

We recognise that because effective RSE will alert young people to what is appropriate and inappropriate sexual behaviour, there is an increased possibility that a disclosure relating to abuse may be made. All staff are aware of the Child Protection procedures and will report the disclosure to the designated person for child protection immediately. As any new legislation is introduced a longer review and evaluation process will take place involving Governors, parents/carers, and whole staff.

What will be taught, and when?

The content of RSE falls into three categories:

1. Compulsory content relating to aspects of human reproduction which form part of the Science curriculum and from which parents/carers have no right to request to withdraw their child.
2. Compulsory content relating to families, respectful relationships (including online ones), the law, and equality from which parents/carers have no right to request to withdraw their child.
3. Compulsory content of sex education from which parents have the right to request to withdraw their child.

Parents and carers have the right to request to withdraw a child from any aspect of sex education – but not relationship or health education – that is not covered in the Science curriculum. Parents and carers who are considering this are advised in the first instance to contact the Head to discuss their

concerns. Please know that we support your decision should you choose to do so. We recognise that parents/carers are the primary educators of their children in how to build loving relationships, and we hope St. Bede's can play an important part in supporting them through its RSE provision. When the time of teaching sex education approaches we will contact parents/carers who have requested to withdraw their child to give more information about the topics we are about to cover, and our approach to them. Parents can request to view teaching materials. The topics we consider to be sex education are:

- the ethics of contraception
- the damage caused by sexually explicit material; e.g. pornography
- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, and domestic abuse
- female genital mutilation
- the online risks of grooming, sexting, and sharing or viewing indecent images of children (including those created by children)
- sexuality and the law, and same-sex relationships
- positive sexual relationships, and sexual ethics and marriage
- strategies for identifying and managing sexual pressure, including understanding peer pressure, resisting pressure and not pressurising others
- the characteristics and positive aspects of healthy one-to-one intimate relationships, which include mutual respect, consent, loyalty, trust, shared interests and outlook, sex and friendship
- aspects of health that can be affected by choices people make in sex and relationships, positively or negatively, e.g. physical, emotional, mental, sexual and reproductive health and wellbeing
- how the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour