St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Sex and Relationship Education Policy

Ethos

St Mary's, Cambridge (the School) is a Catholic Christian School which seeks to reflect gospel values. The Church teaches that love shared in marriage is a sign of the love of God to the community. We learn about love, commitment and forgiveness in relationships and are able to develop most fully when we are valued and affirmed.

Mary Ward believed that girls should be given a broad education, 'in the classes they will teach a sense of duty, Christian doctrine, good morals… all those liberal exercises which are more suitable for every state of life.' Teaching about sex and relationships is part of the education for every stage of life.

Rationale

At St Mary's we define Sex and Relationship Education as lifelong learning about what it is to be human, understanding and respecting ourselves, relating lovingly to others and transmitting and nurturing the gift of life responsibly.

We aim to comply with The Equality Act 2010 as far as is compatible with our status as a single sex school with a religious foundation. We have drawn up our Policy in accordance with Government schools' legislation and with reference to the document 'Education and Sexuality in Catholic Schools' in which it states: 'We can offer sex education in the spirit of 'Good News', written with regard to our becoming more fully human. Our education should not be 'problem or crisis' led but be positive, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks to be understood and appreciated.'

Our Policy is intended for all pupils including the Early Years and Boarders. We recognise the pressures of modern life on young people and we seek to reinforce and support the sex education which is primarily provided by parents. The Sex and Relationship Education programme at St Mary's emphasises family and religious values while respecting the variety of family models today. We recognise that education in sex and relationships forms an important part of promoting Fundamental British Values.

This policy should be read alongside the Mary Ward Characteristics.

Aims

In the Junior School we aim to:

- impart a knowledge and understanding of the ways in which bodies grow and change physically, and how we develop emotionally
- develop personal and moral values of love, respect and care
- value family life
- develop self-esteem, respect and empathy for others
- develop the confidence to explore moral dilemmas, making appropriate choices

In the Senior School we aim to give pupils:

- A positive self image and respect for self and others
- A deeper understanding of their human, physical and emotional development
- An understanding of the joys and challenges of intimate relationships and the skills to cope with problems which may arise
- The ability to make moral decisions based on an informed conscience
- The confidence to express and maintain a moral stance as they approach adulthood

We hope to achieve these aims by:

- Providing accurate information in Science, PSHEE and Religious Education lessons

- Providing a secure environment within which to discuss issues
- Encouraging the development of appreciative, evaluative and analytical skills
- Maintaining a whole-school ethos of respect for and value of the individual
- Providing support for staff delivering the programme
- Providing the opportunity to talk to chaplains or counsellors if the need arises.

Underlying Principles

- Sexuality is a gift from God
- We are made to love and be loved
- What we say with our bodies should reflect what we mean in our hearts and minds
- Mature Christian sexuality involves openness and commitment to others
- Genuine love is creative
- Pupils have a right to be informed of the dangers associated with irresponsible sexual activity. When exploring the morality of all aspects sexual ethics, Catholic and other Christian perspectives are discussed as well as secular perspectives
- Sex and relationship is a sensitive area and the needs of ethnic minorities and cultural variations will be treated sensitively, as will discussions about sexual orientation/gender

The Delivery of Sex and Relationship Education

The delivery of Sex and Relationship Education is delivered through Science and RE/PSHEE lessons and via the nurses, a female Junior School teacher and invited speakers where appropriate. It is developmental and appropriate to the age and stage of the pupils. The teaching in the Junior School links directly with that of Year 7. Cultural differences and religious beliefs are taken into consideration and we endeavour to meet the needs of individuals.

Parental Right of Withdrawal

Section 241 of the Education Act gives parents the right to withdraw their child from any, or all, parts of a school's programme of sex education., other than those elements which are required by the National Curriculum for Science.

It is our hope that parents would wish pupils to be involved in the School's programme. Parents with concerns are invited to arrange an appointment with the Head of RE or Director of Christian Life to discuss them and see if they can be resolved. If the matter remains unresolved, parents need to notify the Governors of their intention to withdraw their child from the programme.

Review of Policy
The Head and Head of Juniors are responsible for the Policy. The Policy is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team.

Date of review: September 2018
Date of next review: September 2019