



The London Oratory School

1863

Relationship and Sex Education Policy

First Principles

The London Oratory School puts the service and safeguarding of the best interests of the child at the cornerstone of its approach to Relationship and Sex Education [\[1\]](#). The principles that guide the exploration of these ‘best interests’ are set out clearly in the underpinning spiritual and moral framework that is distinctive of both Catholicism and the Catholic School. That spiritual framework views each human person as fundamentally loved into being by the Trinitarian God, and, deeply rooted in, and called into stronger relationship with, God. The sonship and daughterhood of God are thus at the deepest level of identity for each human person; this confers a special and ineradicable dignity on every human. This Policy seeks to support that ineradicable personal dignity.

At the moral level, the School puts the accent on reason grounded in the natural law and revealed and guaranteed in the Catholic Church’s authoritative sources and teachings. In the domain of Relationship and Sex education, the accents of this education are on the habituation of the human person into actions that will the good of the other, that are just, courteous, courageous, honourable, noble, and that support and develop pupils in their own growth towards purity of heart.

Relationship and Sex Education forms part of the School’s broader programme of educating in virtue: those objective habits of character that are constitutive of the good life - rather than an education in ‘values’, which are necessarily subjective and shifting. This programme is communicated through the subject based curriculum, especially the Religious Education Department, at appropriate points, and through the pastoral care structures, personnel and programme, including the counselling team. Together, this forms a maximal and integrated approach to the question of moral formation, of which the issues raised in contemporary RSE programme form but one part.

As part of the broader character formation programme, the goal of this policy is, together with parents, to support pupils’ maturation towards an authentic freedom for excellence in the moral life, living wisely, authentically lovingly and with good sense. It is thus as much about personal formation, as it is about the imparting of information.

To meet its statutory obligations, the School’s RSE policy has due regard to the latest version of the Government’s guidance on Sex and Relationship Education, which can be found [here](#).

Parents

The School recognises that parents (and other carers who stand in their place) are the primary educators of their own children and that they merely delegate part of the task of education to the specialised support that a school is able to provide. The right of educating children comes directly to parents from God and is a right that cannot be surrendered. The School seeks to support and not replace parents in this role. This is particularly true in the delicate and personal area of guidance in sexual and relational matters.

- The School encourages parents to be aware of their own inalienable responsibilities in educating their children.
- The School will provide in advance full information to parents about the RSE Policy and the RSE Programme, and will give opportunities for consultation.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of the RSE Programme provided by the School except for those parts which are outlined in the National Curriculum for Science. These include the biological aspects of human growth and reproduction. Parents must inform the School in writing in advance if they intend to withdraw their child so that alternative and appropriate supervision can be made.
- Parents should address any concerns or objections to the content or delivery of RSE in the first instance to the Headmaster. Should this fail to resolve the matter, parents should follow the School's complaints procedure.

Defining RSE

The Department for Education defines RSE as “lifelong learning about physical, moral and emotional development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage and family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health.” [\[2\]](#) It identifies three main elements:

- attitudes and values
- personal and social skills
- knowledge and understanding

The School is required to teach those aspects of RSE which are covered by the content of the National Curriculum for Science.

1. Purposes and Aims

The School recognises the role of the Catholic Church in education, and the teaching of the Church underpins this policy and the provision of RSE. “In a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognised as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all people, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe and, in her unfailing solicitude, of assisting people to come to the fullness of this life.” [3] The School is committed to the education of the whole person, including physical, intellectual, cultural, social, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects, aiming at producing pupils who feel, judge and act consistently in accordance with right reason enlightened by the example and teaching of Jesus Christ.

In teaching RSE the School will present a positive view of human acts and desires in the context of happiness and self-fulfilment as the natural end of human life and the life of Supernatural Grace and friendship with God to which we are called as Christians, a life which is intrinsically joyful. The School will seek to promote an understanding of the role of pleasure in human life and how the wounds of original sin have made the handling of pleasure more complex.

In the light of these principles the programme for RSE, together with all other teaching and activities in the School, aims to:

- promote a vision of the human person as made in the image and likeness of God and regenerated by Baptism to be conformed to Christ
- enable pupils to understand the centrality of right reason and the natural law in the life of happiness and self-fulfilment to which all human beings are ordered
- enable pupils to understand the natural teleology and purpose of sexual activity and the consequences and responsibilities for human behaviour that flow from it
- encourage pupils to understand the teaching of the Church on the procreative and unitive purpose of marriage
- promote the understanding of the centrality and uniqueness of the Sacrament of Matrimony in the procreation and upbringing of children
- promote the understanding of the Sacrament of Matrimony as a covenant and sign of the relationship between God and mankind, and between Christ and His Church
- promote awareness of the joys, blessings and challenges involved in married life
- provide support and information for pupils and their parents in sexual and relational matters according to Catholic teaching
- encourage the development of chastity as a safeguard to the integrity of the human person
- encourage use of supernatural means for fostering the life of Sanctifying Grace such as prayer and the sacraments

- encourage the development of the four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, courage and temperance) as prerequisites of human happiness
- promote an understanding of the ontological equality and dignity of all human beings
- enable pupils to understand the importance of the natural virtue of justice and the theological virtue of charity as the foundation for their respectful relations with other people and with society

Governors

- The governors of the School acknowledge and intend to promote the consistent teaching of the Catholic Church in the fulfilment of the ecclesial and statutory duties for the benefit of the children in their care
- They recognise that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, and that parents have special rights and duties over education in sexual and relational matters
- They draw up the RSE policy in consultation with parents and ensure that the policy is available to parents
- They ensure that any programme of study relating to RSE is in conformity with this policy
- They ensure that the policy provides proper and adequate coverage of the relevant National Curriculum Science topics
- The governors intend to comply with statutory requirements

Headmaster

- The Headmaster has overall responsibility for implementing the RSE policy and programme and its integration into the school curriculum and Catholic life
- The Headmaster or delegated senior member of staff will ensure that any discussion or treatment of sexual and relational matters in lessons or other school activities is consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church. He will assist colleagues in acquiring and presenting an accurate and sensitive treatment of these matters.
- The Headmaster takes extremely seriously his responsibility to ensure that the pupils' right to a childhood is robustly safeguarded. The protection of innocence and the carefully and sensitively managed growth in self- understanding and personal insight, especially through adolescence, are essential elements of this.

Staff

- RSE is a whole school matter
- All teachers have a responsibility of care in fostering the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of their pupils
- All teachers are expected to teach in accordance with the Purposes and Aims of this Policy and the teachings of the Catholic Church
- All teachers are responsible for ensuring that lesson plans and resources do not offend against chastity and modesty or present an occasion of sin for pupils
- Whilst the Catholic Church has clarity on which teachings in relation to RSE it commends, alternative views on the issues can be appropriately explored
- Appropriate training will be made available to all staff teaching RSE

Quality Assurance

The School monitors and evaluates its RSE programme through its routine quality assurance processes, which include lesson observations, appraisal, and a critical evaluation of the programme.

RSE Within Contemporary Society

The School recognises that RSE of its very nature has to be handled sensitively and with tact. The issues raised may concern matters of maturity, of the personal experience of pupils, of disagreement with the teaching of the Church and of harmful or illegal activity.

In particular, the teaching of RSE should be sensitive to the often complex family and relational situations in which some pupils live. Care needs to be taken that these issues are presented in the light of God's merciful love and compassion and that all pupils and parents are made to feel supported and not excluded, as betokens a mature, self-confident and civilised School. At the same time, the School recognises its duty to present these matters in a clear, objective and tasteful way and in accord with the Christian vocation to chastity.

The School also recognises the importance of developing the virtue of justice in pupils. It is by this virtue that humans enjoy fair and respectful relationships with others in society, giving to each person what is due to him or her. This includes just and fair treatment of those who may not share some of the principles of morality taught at the School and avoidance of all disrespect and unjust discrimination in their regard. Lessons will help pupils realise the nature of teasing, bullying and aggressive behaviour (including online bullying), prejudice-based language, and how to respond and ask for help. The wider pastoral system and approach of teachers will remain vigilant in challenging and resolving *all* bullying, humiliation and mockery.

The School also recognises, and wishes to do its part, in supporting parents to prepare pupils for the challenging terrain of the morally and mentally healthy and safe use of technology. It views the cultivation of virtue in the users of such technology as the most effective means to this, tackling not just the symptoms of technological abuse and misuse, but the underlying causes.

Supporting Pupils at Risk

Pupils will need to feel safe and secure in the environment in which RSE takes place. Effective RSE will provide opportunities for discussion of inappropriate behaviour which could lead to disclosure of a safeguarding issue. Where a teacher suspects that a pupil is at risk of abuse, or a victim of it, the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy must be followed and the designated senior member of staff immediately informed.

[1] N.B. A note on nomenclature: the DfE term this policy *Sex and Relationship Education*; the Catholic Education Service prefers *Relationship and Sex Education*. This is to communicate the point that the latter (sex) can only meaningfully and most healthily exist in the context of the former (relationships), and that the two should not be separated from each other. Thus, DfE documents will be referred to as SRE; the School's document, RSE.

[2] Sex and Relationship Guidance, DfE 2000

[3] Vatican II: *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3



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