

Relationships & Sexuality Education Policy

Our sexuality is a central and significant part of who we are and how we see ourselves in relation to others and so contributes to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is primarily about human relationships and has moral, ethical and religious dimensions; for this reason, the College delivers its programme through its pastoral and curriculum teams in partnership with several agencies. As a Catholic College, the primacy of Catholic teaching on all matters of spiritual and moral development will be foremost in any taught classes and in any external provision organised by the College.

Aims:

To prepare the students for adult relationships within a Catholic moral setting that will ensure the development of responsible and healthy behaviour in all friendships and relationships

To present accurate, factual information in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner appropriate to the age and maturity of the students within the traditions and values of the College's Catholic ethos

To promote the values of a stable family life, self-restraint, respect for the dignity of others, chastity, marriage as sacrament and the responsibilities of parenthood

To promote a positive view of sexuality that will enhance students' personal development and self-esteem and develop the skills necessary to feel good about themselves and others

To make students aware of their own sexuality, the physical and emotional changes in life, the importance of relationships and how these are affected by human growth

To promote strategies that will allow students to develop the skills necessary for healthy relationships with their peer group, family, friends and adults

To help each student to arrive at an understanding of the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality and to foster an awareness of the scriptural and doctrinal foundations of these teachings

As a result, we seek to enable students to acquire knowledge and understanding of self which will develop a positive sense of self awareness and an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of others. They should develop personal skills which will enable them to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as well as coping strategies to protect themselves and others in situations of peer pressure and conflict. All students will have an opportunity to acquire and use communication and social skills to solve problems, make decisions and develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyle. Through the development of appropriate vocabulary and concepts, they will be able to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development, as well as exploring stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality.

Organisation:

The programme is co-ordinated by the Heads of Key Stages and Head of Religious Development who will review the programme and whole school policy on a biennial basis via evaluations from Form Tutors through the monitoring and evaluation of existing provision. They will arrange in-service training for the RSE Team, Form Tutors and/or other staff in topics which they feel require additional support.

Methodology:

The programme is largely taught within a timetabled programme of personal, social and health education (in line with the Statements of Minimum Requirements at Key Stage 3 & 4), with clear curricular links to units of work in both Science and Religious Studies.

Teaching and learning is based on a wide range of strategies including whole year group, whole class and small group teaching, brainstorming, quizzes and questionnaires, role play, investigative work, audio-visual materials, discussion and facilitation by outside speakers and qualified professionals. All such outside help will be provided on the understanding that they promote the teaching of the Catholic Church on matters of sexuality and human development and are invited only after approval by the Head of Key Stage and Head of Religious Development.

As maturity is not always determined by age, teachers are alert to the personal and emotional circumstances of each student and take this into account in the delivery of the programme. The range of teaching resources employed in the programme for all year groups is available to parents for perusal on request.

Students are allowed a right to privacy in class discussions on sexuality [i.e. they may not wish to ask or answer personal questions] but in accordance with the College's Child Protection Policy, not to confidentiality.

Parental Involvement:

Lumen Christi College regards Relationships and Sexuality Education as a shared responsibility between school and parents. The College thus welcomes the involvement of parents at every stage of the RSE Programme from planning through delivery to review. Parents are made aware of the programme at the beginning of each Key Stage and copies of the programme itself, this policy document and any audio-visual materials used are available to parents from the school for perusal at home. The teaching offered by the school is intended to reinforce positive family relationships and the role of parents, highlight the importance of marriage between man and woman as a sacrament and encourage students towards a healthy and Christian approach to all relationships.

Programme of Study:

Pupils undertake a coherent programme of study in RSE from Year 8 to Year 14 in the College. This is done largely through the College's Pastoral and Religious Studies Programmes. Assemblies and retreats are used as a means to promote positive messages in relation to these programmes. They highlight the uniqueness and precious nature of each individual and reinforce the respect that each person deserves. At each stage, the content is appropriate to the age group and teachers

seek to achieve the balance between delivery of content and the development of a moral approach based on Catholic teaching.

In **Year 8** the focus is on physical development and the human body with a joint unit delivered by through the Pastoral Programme and by the RSE Team, the Science Department and Love for Life. In Science the focus is on identification of male and female body parts, acquisition of appropriate language, puberty and menstruation, pregnancy and the life of the embryo. The RSE Team builds on these resources and addresses the wonder of each life as a miracle of God's creation and the natural development of a young person through teenage years, into young adulthood. Opportunities are provided for boys and girls to discuss changes at puberty in single sex groups. Healthy relationships and the promotion of a positive self-image is covered by the Love for Life Team who provide an interactive media based session to support the content of the Year 8 Programme. The RE programme explores moral issues in relation to making good choices.

The **Year 9** RSE Programme concentrates on relationships with adults, peer groups and friends. The role of parents, resisting peer pressure and the development of good communication skills to resolve conflicts within family and friendship groups feature in the Pastoral Programme. In the Year 9 Retreat and pastoral lessons, whilst considering the characteristics of a good friend, students learn to recognise their own strengths and weaknesses as well as the importance of having respect for themselves and others. The RE Programme also explores moral issues in the context of developing conscience. A representative from NEXUS delivers a presentation on Staying Safe Online, addressing the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

In **Year 10**, students are encouraged to establish and sustain healthy friendships and relationships based on mutual respect. They explore: Self Concept and Emotions; Personal Safety including Internet Safety; Morals and Values; Managing Influences and Making Decisions; the reality of STIs and risks associated with contraception. With the support of LIFE NI, students develop skills for making responsible choices, coping with peer pressure, influences including the media, social interaction and abstinence, all as positive options and achievable realities. The RE Programme for Year 10 also supports the delivery of the Pastoral Programme examining morals and values. The Pastoral Programme concentrates on the promotion of assertiveness skills, risk assessment concepts and safety techniques, encouraging students to take responsibility for the safety of themselves and others. Students are made aware of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, ways of saying 'no', how to ask for help and how to cope in an emergency.

In **Year 11**, the focus is on the promotion of positive self-image and the development of skills to deal with relationships. The Pastoral Programme looks at Self-Awareness in relation to the uniqueness of the individual; Healthy Living (in collaboration with the PE Department) promoting greater understanding of personal hygiene; Life – A Risky Business, identifying and exploring the risks and implications associated with alcohol, drug taking and peer pressure. A unit is dedicated to developing relationships, nurturing self-respect and sexual responsibility, assertiveness skills and the identification of the qualities students seek in a partner. Opportunities are provided for boys and girls to discuss perceived sexual pressures and to gain

reassurance in relation to perceived expectations. They explore the issues of attraction, hormones, guarding the mind and heart and taking responsibility for one's decisions. The Love for Life Team provides an interactive media based session to support the content of the Year 11 Programme, focusing on virginity, sex and emotional distress.

In Year 12, a unit on Relationships and Conflict Resolution endeavours to equip students with the skills of conflict resolution when dealing with various types of relationships. Core messages are underpinned by visiting speakers. Through the Religious Studies Programme, students are given the opportunity to examine issues surrounding relationships in terms of human sexuality and the sanctity of life. The core areas examined are: The sacredness of human life from conception; Marriage; abortion; euthanasia; contraception; IVF; Responsible Parenthood. The Year 12 students participate in a one-day LIFE Conference on the theme of Choices. This brings the programme material from Key Stage 3 and 4 together and deals with it in the context of making good life choices and decisions.

At **Sixth Form**, the focus is on the development of friendships and mature sexual relationships and the skills essential to cope with these. They explore types of love, dating, rites of passage, pornography, addiction and breaking habits and patterns. Talks on chastity, STIs and the impact of alcohol and drugs on relationships are delivered in the Enrichment Programme. This is complimented by the facilitation of focused small group discussions and a Health Awareness event. The College continues to highlight the importance of Catholic values and morality in these areas, and to help the students come to a deeper understanding of how and why the Church promotes the sanctity of human life from the moment of conception until its natural end. The Love for Life Team look at committed versus casual relationships, sex and the law and other risk taking behaviour. This is complemented by NEXUS who deliver a presentation on the theme of sexual exploitation.

Confidentiality:

Any student approaching a member of staff for individual advice on sexual matters is encouraged to seek advice from his/her parents or from qualified professionals. Where any approach leads a member of staff to believe that a child is contemplating a course of behaviour likely to place him/her in moral or physical danger or in breach of the law, the member of staff has a duty to inform the pupil of the risks involved and inform the designated Child Protection teacher who, where appropriate, will involve parents and support services. No undertakings of confidentiality are given to pupils in this area.

Parents are welcome at any time to discuss the delivery of the RSE programme with the Heads of Key Stages, teacher responsible for RSE, any Form Tutor, School Counsellor or the Vice-Principal.

Child Protection:

We are aware that young people growing up can experience confusion around sexual identity and sexual orientation. Each case is dealt with sensitivity, highlighting the unique nature and gift that every single person is, as someone created in God's image and likeness. All curricular delivery advocates abstinence as the acceptable option for young people. This is promoted in the context of God's Natural Law and His design for humanity.

Where a student reports that he or she has been subject to threatening sexual behaviour, the matter will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Child Protection Policy.

Related School Policies:

The Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy is set within the broader context of Pastoral Care and as such should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Medicines Policy

Review:

The RSE policy is reviewed biennially by the Vice-Principal, Heads of Key Stage and Head of Religious Development and amended as considered necessary. Where necessary, the reviewed policy is presented at a governors meeting and subsequently a staff meeting to allow adjustments to be discussed.