



RELATIONSHIPS, SEX AND HEALTH EDUCATION POLICY

This policy applies across the College at all age ranges including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools. It should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding, Counter-bullying, Equal Opportunities policies as well as Pastoral and Prayer & Liturgy guidance.

St. Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such it nurtures a holistic environment which includes a commitment to academic excellence, religious values, friendly discipline, and personal attention.

Policy owner: Assistant Head: Director of Studies
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Ratify by Governors: Yes

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Section 1 Definition of RSHE

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) is an integral part of the mission and goal of the College. One of our core pillars, derived from the charism of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, is the “Education of the Whole Person”. RSHE is thus an education of the person in reference to their spiritual, social, cultural, moral, emotional and physical development. We recognise that sexual relationships grow out of a wider context of human relationships. The human person, made in the image and likeness of God is created for and called to a life of self-giving love expressed in relationship with God and others. As Trinity, God is a community of persons, and the image of God in us is, likewise, relational.

RSHE at St Columba’s College involves learning about relationships, sexual health, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, diversity and personal identity. It involves a combination of sharing information and exploring issues and values. RSHE does not promote sexual activity either directly or indirectly.

Our understanding and philosophy of human relationships and sexuality is founded on the Catholic understanding of the human person, relationships, marriage and the gift of sexuality revealed in scripture and elucidated in Church teaching. At the same time, we remain conscious of the pluralistic nature of society today, respectful of differing opinions, open to dialogue, and committed to safeguarding the dignity of every person within our community.

Section 2 Statutory Requirements

As in all schools, our teaching must reflect the law (including the Equality Act 2010) as it applies to relationships, so that young people clearly understand what the law allows and does not allow, and the wider legal implications of decisions they may make. As a Catholic school, we recognise that Relationships, Sex and Health Education should be taught in the context of God’s unconditional love, with mercy and compassion, so that parents and students feel supported and not judged or excluded because their family may be of a different type from the model set out in Church teaching. In the light of the DFE guidance on RSHE, LGBTQ+ content must be fully integrated into programmes of study for RSHE, rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. Students should understand that sexual orientation and gender reassignment are amongst the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

At St Columba’s College we teach RSHE as set out in this policy. This forms part of the wider Pastoral curriculum, is in line with the statutory in the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Guidance (updated July 2025 for introduction 1st September 2026) and has due regard for the guidance offered in Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in Schools and Colleges (September 2021). It has been developed in consultation with the governors, staff, pupils and parents of our school.

The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, made under sections 34 and 35 of the Children and Social Work Act 2017, make Relationships Education compulsory for all pupils. In making arrangements for RSHE, the College has regard to any guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002 that applies in relation to the provision of education by maintained schools. Whilst the government guidance re. health education is not statutory for independent schools, the College recognises its responsibility to educate students on the topics of both physical and mental health and these are built into the curriculum through the Pastoral Programme, Science and PE/Games.

Section 3 Ethos

The College recognises that the primary educators of the young people in our care are the parents themselves. Education in relationships reflects on and explores family life and relationships because it is in the family that children first experience love, affection, respect, saying sorry, forgiveness and other ways of relating to others. The College aims therefore to support parents in their responsibility to educate their children and help them to make informed choices through a programme which reinforces their understanding of human dignity, love and morality. Pupils should understand the benefits of healthy relationships to their mental wellbeing and self-respect.

Children learn about their personal, social and physical development in ways appropriate to their age, level of maturity and developmental needs. This development is fostered in many areas of the school curriculum and includes aspects of character such as self-respect, confidence, responsibility, and fundamentally an understanding of oneself as a unique and beautiful part of God's creation. The centrality of self-giving love, the importance of love for relationships, including love's sexual expression in marriage is taught and promoted.

The teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health is placed in the context of Catholic Church teaching. Lessons must contribute to students' development of a positive self-image together with respect and love for one another whilst emphasising sexuality as a gift from God which recognises the beauty and dignity of the human person.

Section 4 Procedures, Aims and Objectives

The procedures associated with the pastoral aspects of this policy are covered where appropriate in the following policies:

- a. Safeguarding
- b. Counter-bullying
- c. Equal Opportunities
- d. Pastoral
- e. Prayer & Liturgy

They are also addressed directly in the schemes of work associated with the Pastoral Programme, Religious Education and Biology. In the Prep School this would be in the Science scheme of work.

Confidentiality and Advice - While students are offered sensitive and appropriate support, they must be made aware that certain information cannot be kept confidential and if disclosures are made, the following procedures are adhered to:

- i. Disclosure or suspicion of possible abuse – the school Designated Senior Lead is informed. (See Safeguarding and Child-Protection Policy)
- ii. Disclosure of Pregnancy or sexual activity - the school will encourage students to inform their parents. The member of staff to whom the disclosure is made will consult with the Designated Senior Lead. If a pupil feels unable to talk with his/her parents, the Designated Senior Lead will seek to advise them in line with the teaching of the Catholic Church and, if thought necessary, refer them to the GP or the school nurse and parents are informed.

Withdrawal Procedures

Any parents who wish to discharge their legal right to withdraw their child from any aspect of RSE must communicate their wishes to the Headmaster (Senior) or Deputy Head of Prep (Pastoral) in writing. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from the non-Science components of Sex Education only. Relationship education is compulsory. A copy of withdrawal requests will be placed in the pupil's educational record. The Headmaster or Head of Prep will discuss the request with parents and take appropriate action. Purposeful education will be provided during the period of withdrawal. Parents can withdraw pupils up until three terms before their sixteenth birthday. After that point, the pupil will be able to request to opt in and the College will make arrangements to provide them with sex education.

The application of the principles discussed through these policies and schemes of work should enable students to:

- a. Enjoy good self-esteem and self-worth as creatures made in the image and likeness of God.
- b. Develop an understanding of the emotional, moral, spiritual, social, health-related and personal aspects of human sexuality.
- c. Understand the legal framework relating to sexual relationships, including the major provisions of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2023) with particular regard to their mental health, personal safety and welfare in the matter of physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.
- d. Be alive to issues such as everyday sexism, misogyny, homophobia and gender stereotypes and consider critically the values of the modern world and their own experience with regard to human sexuality. This may include awareness of bullying due to sexual orientation and peer pressure to enter into sexual relationships, grooming, radicalisation, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage.
- e. Discern and make informed choices in the light of the teaching of the Church.
- f. Develop an understanding of love as central to human relationships and the way in which this is expressed in marriage, parenthood and other kinds of relationships and states of life.
- g. Bring about a deeper appreciation of the importance and values of the family life, while appreciating the varied forms the family can take in the modern world and avoiding sitting in judgement upon the lives of others.
- h. Understand the Sacrament of Marriage as a covenant and sign of the relationship between God and humankind.
- i. Be aware of the joys, problems and difficulties in marriage, such as adultery, divorce and involuntary childlessness.
- j. Understand the vocation of celibacy as a viable pathway, as seen in priesthood and the religious life, and the joys and challenges it brings.
- k. Know and understand the details of puberty and human procreation in their physical, emotional, spiritual and moral aspects.
- l. Understand their physical and emotional development; to be aware of their attitudes and values and have a sense of responsibility for themselves and others.
- m. Develop self-respect, empathy and equality for others, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+) issues and the law.
- n. Reflect on their relationships and recognise the qualities that help relationships to grow and develop positively such as love, compassion, mercy and commitment. This will include developing skills of communication, including how to develop and manage changing relationships and emotions.
- o. Gain understanding of personal safety and welfare regarding sexual relationships and how to seek support when required.

Section 5 Delivery

Delivery of education in human sexuality is primarily the responsibility of the student's own parents. The College assists parents where suitable in delivering certain aspects of this training to the student in keeping with the ethos of the College.

The College's RSHE education is delivered through five key strands:

- a. Religious Education
- b. Science
- c. Retreats
- d. The Pastoral Programme
- e. Other e.g. in digital safety modules in Computer Science

Delivery in Prep is primarily by tutors through the pastoral programme and linked through themed weeks such as bullying, relationships and community. Age specific education also takes place through age group assemblies and in cross curricular strategies such as in RE, Science and PE.

Delivery by the Senior school is primarily by RE teachers, where RSHE forms part of the curriculum as appropriate at all key stages, and by Science teachers, where human sexuality is part of the statutory curriculum. Some elements are also covered in Computer Science, especially those focusing on online relationships, and the School Nurse has a role in promoting some resources related to Health Education. For some aspects of the programme tutors facilitate discussion with tutees, such as bullying, friendship and sex discrimination.

Staff have an important role in modelling positive behaviours so that all students are affirmed. RSHE must be accessible to all students and curriculum design will take into account that some may be more vulnerable to exploitation, bullying and other issues on account of their SEND.

Outside speakers may also participate to help with delivery of topics, such as the impact of watching pornography, and to enhance the work being done in school.

Section 6 Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Governors will approve the RSHE policy and hold the Headmaster to account for its implementation. The Headmaster/Head of Prep is responsible for ensuring that RSHE is taught consistently across the school, and for managing requests to withdraw pupils.

The Deputy Heads are responsible for overseeing the design of an appropriate RSHE programme and Scheme of Work, the details of which will be compiled by the Subject Leaders of Religious Education and the Subject Leaders of Science.

Form tutors and those delivering specific aspects of the RSHE Curriculum in lessons are responsible for:

- Delivering RSHE in a sensitive way, ensuring it is inclusive and age-appropriate
- Maintaining professional boundaries
- Monitoring discussions and progress
- Answering pupils' questions in an age-appropriate manner
- Passing on any safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Responding to the needs of individual pupils, including special educational needs and disability (SEND) students
- Responding appropriately to pupils whose parents wish them to be withdrawn from sex education.

Staff do not have the right to opt out of teaching RSHE. Staff who have concerns about teaching RSHE are encouraged to discuss this with the Headmaster.

The Head of the Pastoral Programme is responsible for:

- Provision of age-appropriate and inclusive RSHE resources
- Support of tutors delivering RSHE
- Quality assurance of RSHE delivery

Section 7 Monitoring and Evaluation

The delivery of RSHE is monitored by the Head of the Pastoral Programme and Deputy Head through the delivery of a set curriculum and regular learning walks. The curriculum builds on the knowledge pupils have previously acquired across different subjects. Pupils' development in RSHE is monitored by tutors, RE teachers and Science teachers through discussion and assessment in lessons. This may form part of comments on reports. Assessments are used to identify where pupils need extra support or intervention. RSHE Lessons are planned to ensure that pupils of differing abilities, including the most able, are suitably challenged. The content is evaluated by student voice groups and teacher feedback. In the Senior School, the Head of the Pastoral Programme keeps a record of this tracking. In the Prep School, the PSHE Subject Lead keeps the record. The policy will be reviewed at least every three years or in response to changes in the legal framework