

Cardinal Newman Catholic School Education for Personal Relationships Policy

Introduction

“I came that they may have life and have it to the full”

(John 10v10)

Education focuses on the growth and development of the whole person. It should aim to integrate a person’s intellectual, spiritual, moral, emotional, psychological, social and physical development. The quote from St. John’s gospel (above) gives Christians an image of how that life is to be fulfilled. The Christian God as Trinity provides the model of all relationships – the communion of Father, Son and Spirit. God is love and the communion of love is reflected in the Godhead. We love because we have first been loved by others; we are called to love one another as we have first been loved by God.

Throughout a student’s time at Cardinal Newman Catholic School they will receive a variety of learning experiences, some formal, others “hidden”, which all form part of the educational process and which teach a student how to form, nourish and sustain relationships.

The Universal Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

“The human person needs to live in society. Society is not for him an extraneous addition but a requirement of his nature. Through the exchange with others, mutual service and dialogue with his brethren, man develops his potential; he thus responds to his vocation.”

[1879]

Attitudes and values develop in many different school contexts making it vitally important that the school reflects values of Christian community. In this way, Education for Personal Relationships stands within the broader context of the spiritual life of the school, the school’s pastoral support system, and approaches to rewards and discipline within the school as a whole. More specifically, attitudes and values in relation to sexuality will be developed through Religious Education, Personal, Social and Moral Education (PSME) and the National Science Curriculum.

Parents are also key figures in educating their children for relationships and sexuality. Therefore, parents are seen by the school as the primary partner in supporting the personal growth of an individual child. By working together it is hoped that school and parents can realize the school’s mission of ‘Caritas’ in caring for each student’s personal development. This school / parent partnership will always be invaluable in nurturing Christian values in our young people, but it is particularly important for both the school and parents to have a shared understanding in relation to relationships and sexuality in the context of our present social climate. This dialogue between home and school has been formalized through a meeting discussing Relationships and Sexuality which takes place every two years. Also, parents have been consulted during the writing of this policy and will be consulted at future policy reviews.

It is the mission aim of Cardinal Newman Catholic School to “promote the well being and freedom of the human person” to prepare our young people to play a full part in society. In order to do this, in relation to Education for Relationships and Sexuality, students need both information and a values based programme to form opinions and attitudes and to enhance self-esteem. This policy sets out the approach adopted at Cardinal Newman Catholic School.

[“Sexuality” is defined in this document as the capacity to love and procreate, particularly the aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others]

[“Love” is defined in this document in the sense of ‘agape’; a free act of self-giving towards another.]

Theological and Ethical Framework

“ . . . they (children and young people) should receive positive and prudent education in matters relating to sex . . . and young people have the right to be stimulated to make sound moral judgements based on well-informed conscience and to put them into practice with a sense of personal commitment.”

Gravissimum Educationis (para. 3)
Second Vatican Council

“Some children are more sexually aware than in the past and they need to be imbued with with sound Christian principles on which to base their relationships. It is all the more urgent that we answer their questions with sensitivity and frankness. They have the right to know the consequences of their actions and true basis on which to form their judgement.”
(Bishops’ Low Week Letter 1987)

There are many ways of expressing love for another, and as Christians, we believe that every human relationship should reflect the loving relationship of the Trinity. God is reflected in human love between persons. Sexuality is one means of expressing that love amongst many others. The tragedy of our cultural context is that sexuality has been distorted and diminished because it has become separated from its essential reference to the person as a whole.

The key principles upon which Education for Personal Relationships and Sexuality are based at Cardinal Newman Catholic School reflect the vision for each individual student set out in the school’s mission statement and aims, combined with the positive Catholic vision of sexual relationships.

They are:

- 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 mind.
- Mature Christian sexuality involves openness and long term commitment to others. This is most clearly reflected through the permanence of the sacrament of marriage.
- Genuine love is creative.
- Each person has a duty to inform their own conscience.

Aims and Objectives

As a result of the 1993 Education Act, all Catholic secondary schools are required to make provision for sex education for all pupils registered at the school. Such education must include education about HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. However, as a Catholic school our mission is to “promote the well being and freedom of the whole human person, understood as created in the image and likeness of God”. This means that our approach to Education for Personal Relationships will, of necessity, go well beyond this legal minimum.

In the light of our mission statement the aims and objectives of our Education for Personal Relationships programme are as follows: -

Aims

- To support the development, growth and journey of the whole person towards becoming ‘fully human, fully alive’ as a unique creation made in God’s image.
- To develop positive self esteem.
- To complement and support the education that is already being undertaken by home and family.
- To enable young people to make free lifestyle choices providing a counter culture to the portrayal of sex in the media and society.
- To offer our young people a Catholic Christian framework to help them make informed decisions.

Objectives

In the light of the aims of our Education for Personal Relationships programme our main objectives are:-

Methodology

- To gain an understanding of where students are in relation to their own knowledge, values and attitudes so that Education for Personal Relationships is both supportive and challenging.
- To provide a forum where pupils can share their concerns and offer a climate of support where they know they will be listened to sensitively.
- To correct mis-information.
- To ensure students recognize the importance of the choices they make (in conscience) and the ways in which these choices mature through knowledge, understanding and Christian belief.

Attitudes and Values

- To encourage students to become aware of their own attitudes and values and understand that these will affect the way they view themselves and others.
- To encourage growth in self respect and self worth recognising that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God.

- To enable students to understand that love (agape) is central and the basis of meaningful relationships epitomized through marriage and family life.

Personal and Social Skills

- To enable students to reflect on their relationships and to recognise the qualities that help relationships grow and develop positively.
- To enable students to recognise the importance of the choices they make and that they are responsible for the decisions they take.
- To help students resist negative peer, social and media pressure.

Knowledge and Understanding

- To increase student understanding of themselves, their own bodies, their emotional development as they grow and change and their relationships with others.
- To explain the process of human procreation.
- To consider carefully responsible parenthood and family planning.
- To give careful consideration of the issue of homosexuality.
- To inform students about HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STI's).
- To enable young people to know and understand the legal framework relating to sexual activity.
- To learn the reasons for delaying sexual activity and for restricting sexual activity to marriage.

Education for Personal Relationships – Ground Rules

In any classes considering issues of relationships and sexuality whether they are delivered through RE, PSE or Science guidelines are always given to the students about the way in which the class will be conducted. They are: -

- Listen to people when they are speaking.
- Everyone has the right to pass on a question.
- Only one person to speak at a time.
- Laugh with people not at them.
- Encourage people who are less confident.
- Respect other people's opinions.
- Use positive and appropriate language.
- No "put downs".
- No one should be put on the spot or feel threatened.

Dealing with Sensitive Issues:-

Pre-Marital / Extra-Marital Sex

From the Christian perspective love, defined as agape, and sexual love are unconditional. Therefore, any attempt to search for happiness through casual sex is fruitless. Sex without commitment or real relationship is far from the self-giving that enriches the whole person. From this perspective, the approach to Education for Personal Relationships at Cardinal Newman will emphasize that marriage represents the desired context for perfect union.

Responsible Parenthood

Young people should be made aware that the Church teaches that natural methods of family planning respect the dignity of the married couple. If, however, students are sexually active then the approach at Cardinal Newman seeks to make students aware of the wholeness of sexual actions and to assure them that whatever pressures are put upon them they are not obliged to begin or continue sexual relationships.

HIV and AIDS

To speak as if HIV/AIDS were God's punishment for promiscuity is untrue and grossly offensive. Such thinking is a rejection of human compassion revealed in Jesus.

Homosexuality

The Church recognises the dignity of all people. However, since the Church has always taught that sexual love should always find its true place in marriage, a homosexual marriage and a heterosexual marriage can never be equated. The Church seeks to affirm the homosexual as a person, but cannot approve of homosexual genital acts.

Parental Right of Withdrawal

Section 241 of the Education Act 1993 gives parents the right to withdraw their children from any or all parts of a school's programme of sex education, other than those elements which are required by the National Curriculum Science Order (See DFE Circular 5/94 Section 241, paragraphs 16,17,20,23,35). This parental right of withdrawal extends to all pupils in maintained schools, including those over compulsory school age. A pupil in the latter category who sought to challenge the parental decision would if he or she could not resolve the matter with parents, ultimately have to apply to the Courts.

Support Agencies and Guidelines for Operating

Where a student seeks advice on personal matters of sexuality or welfare the teacher's role (including the Year Head) is confined to the educational context, following the theological and ethical framework set out in this policy. This means that the teacher should not offer individual advice to students which is the proper remit of the medical profession or counsellor. The teacher would encourage the student to seek parental advice and to talk to the appropriate support person within the school. In this way, the school makes a distinction between the information and values-based work done in the classroom and advice to individual students.

In addition to the pastoral system of the school, support for students is also available from the Chaplaincy, School Matron, the School Nurse, the School Doctor and Counsellor. In relation to their work each of these follow the guidelines set out below:-

- All professionals working at Cardinal Newman School (whether teaching or medical) should be sensitive to the school’s distinctive ethos and seek to present their medical advice in this moral context.
- All professionals working at Cardinal Newman School should seek to bring the school and the home into a closer partnership for supporting young people. As the school is acting in *loco parentis* the school has a duty to inform the parent unless there is a good reason for not doing so.
- Except within the Sacrament of Reconciliation the school can not offer a student complete confidentiality. The degree of confidentiality would always be governed by the need to protect the child.
- If a teacher or medical professional judged that a student’s disclosure might raise the possibility of the child being at risk, that is, that there was “reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm”, then the designated teacher for Child Protection would be informed. (See School Child Protection Procedures).

Organisation of Education for Personal Relationships at Cardinal Newman Catholic School

1. David Buxton (Deputy Headteacher) is responsible for the planning and delivery of the Education for Personal Relationships policy.
2. The PSE, RE and Science staff will teach the programme.
3. The PSE, RE and Science staff will co-ordinate their teaching as outlined in this policy. Training will be given to staff involved in teaching sensitive issues as necessary.
4. The specific programme for each year group will be taught in PSE, RE and Science in mixed classes, with the exception of several PSE classes in Years 7 and 10 when boys and girls are separated and then brought together.
5. The effectiveness of the programme will be reviewed annually in the late summer term by the policy working group.
6. As reflected in all good educational practice our programme of Education for Personal Relationships will be:

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| Progressive - | taking into account all aspects of the growth and development of our pupils. |
| Integrated - | with the whole of the school curriculum recognising the contribution that each element of the curriculum can make. |
| Co-ordinated - | by the Deputy Headteacher and by members of the Working Party and programme teachers. |

