

DOWNSIDE SCHOOL

Sex and Relationships Education (SRE)

1. Context:

The context for this policy is the Statement of Purpose of the School, and the Policy for Spiritual and Moral Development. The particular nature of the School as a co-educational boarding school in the Benedictine Roman Catholic tradition informs all of these in encouraging development of gifts, commitment to and service of Christ and other people.

2. Description of Policy Formation and Consultation Process:

A draft policy was originally formulated (in 2005) by the Head of Religious Studies (Hugh Walters) and circulated to the following for comment and revision:

- The Abbot
- The Head Master's Council
- All Heads of Department
- The House Masters and House Mistress
- The Chaplaincy Team
- The Infirmary Staff
- A selection of pupils in the school

The final draft policy was then offered to the whole Governing body for final approval and consultation with parents.

3. Aims and Objectives of School Sex and Relationships Education:

3.1. General Framework

Education in sexuality

The prime responsibility for education in sexuality and relationships (as with all education) rests with parents. In collaboration with parents the School has an obligation to help ensure that students understand their sexuality and use their sexual powers responsibly and informed by the

moral teaching of the Church. Our Statement of Purpose and Policy on Spiritual and Moral Development already sets out clearly our general aims concerning the nature of human flourishing in society at Downside. Within this context, SRE addresses the range of issues concerning friendships, emotional development, and other matters pertaining to sexual relationships in particular. The biological issues are dealt with in Science; Religious Studies, PSHE and, more informally and personally, the Houses and Chaplains provide the bulk of the moral and spiritual formation.

3.1.2 What is the teaching of the Catholic Church concerning sexuality?

(CCC numbers refer to paragraphs in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Geoffrey Chapman, 1994)

Human sexuality is an essential dimension of personal identity; it is a fundamental part of God's gift of life and love, and reflects His own self-giving nature: "In His own image He made them, male and female He made them." (Genesis 1:26-28) Rather than seeing sex, as some media commentators do, as merely a recreational activity, we offer a more profound understanding of the joy and depth of human sexual relationships; human life in its sexual differentiation and attraction is part of the essential goodness of God's creating: "God saw all that He had made and found it very good." Sexuality is only truly human if it is an integral part of a life-long committed relationship of marriage in which it is a source of both joy and pleasure (CCC 2362).

The Catholic vision is one in which sexual intercourse is both unitive and procreative; an expression of fidelity which is at the same time fruitful (CCC 2363; 2369). Put another way, the meaning of each act of sexual intercourse is found in the ability both to give oneself to another in mutual self-giving love and to be open to the possibility of creating a new human life (CCC 2366).¹ People who are not prepared

¹ See the 2004 document by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, *Cherishing Life* especially the following paragraph:

125. ... 'Sexual union within marriage can be a moment of celebration, of support, of reconciliation or of a whole range of expressions of married love. Nevertheless, the procreative aspect of sexual love remains an essential part of the human meaning of sexuality, to be respected as such even when the couple is not seeking to have a child. Responsible parenthood will often involve planning when to have children, God willing, but this should not be by means of contraception that places a barrier between the partners, or that suppresses the healthy working of the body to make the act infertile. These actions undermine the full human meaning of sexuality. They also raise other medical and moral questions that should not be overlooked: the long term health implications they may have for women and the serious impact they seem to be having on the environment. In addition to this, some chemical contraceptives do not operate only by preventing conception, but also work by preventing those embryos that are occasionally conceived from implanting.'

to be parents should not engage in sexual intercourse; anything less is a diminution of one's humanity. This is why the context for sexual intercourse is marriage, in which two people are committed to one another and open to new life. This is a principle of reason, that is to say a principle discovered by reflection on the human condition. In this the Church appeals to all, irrespective of faith.

Together with this view of the nature of sexual intercourse, the Church teaches that chastity is a virtue: a respectful attitude towards, and integration of, sexual power which recognises the nature of sexuality as outlined by the Church and affirms the dignity of each person in their sexuality (CCC 2337ff). A central part of SRE must be the cultivation of chastity: respect for one's own sexuality and that of others, but also learning through action to take responsibility for one's own conduct in the face of attraction. This integration of personality is a lifelong and exacting work: it is especially important in adolescence to encourage the right attitudes and behaviour.

Although the Catholic tradition recognises the need to plan a family and stresses the duty of responsible parenthood, it encourages natural methods and periodic abstinence and regards the use of artificial contraception to be morally objectionable. (CCC 2366-2370).² While this teaching has received much criticism in western society in the last forty years, the Church can point out that the use of contraception has, in the second half of the twentieth century made a decisive contribution to encouraging irresponsibility in sexual conduct. Furthermore, by separating sex from its natural link with procreation, freely available contraception has in turn led to a separation of sex from love and the fostering of loving relationships, and contributed massively to emotional upset among the young.

Needless to say, the importance a Catholic places on the sanctity of human life should mean that no form of abortion or abortifacient should ever be used, as it involves the killing of an innocent human being, which is always gravely wrong. This respect for human life from the moment of conception onwards forms the basis also for self esteem, as well as for the respect due to members of the opposite

² *Cherishing Life* paragraph 126. 'The need for effective family planning requires a different and more radical approach. What is required is reliable knowledge of the cycle of female fertility and a willingness to agree to abstain from sexual union at certain times. The last twenty years have seen great improvements in this area and Natural Family Planning is now regarded by respected medical authorities as being highly effective for those who are instructed by trained teachers and who are strongly motivated. There are also some attractive elements in this approach to family planning. These include self-control, greater awareness of bodily function, the involvement of both partners on an equal basis, and the absence of health risks or dependence on constant use of pharmaceuticals. The values of this holistic and human approach to family planning deserve to be considered seriously.'

sex, equally created in the image and likeness of God and equally called to be co-heirs to the Kingdom of God in Christ.

As a Catholic community we believe that the most effective context for sex education is found within the partnership of family, church and school and that this requires an atmosphere of honesty, openness and trust. The formal teaching outlined above is an ideal: there is for example controversy over the use of contraceptives to protect life in the current HIV/AIDS crisis. In the application of this teaching, personal circumstances have always to be taken into account by those in the relevant position of responsibility for pastoral care. The Catholic Church recognises that people fall short in many ways and constantly reminds us that ultimately Christ came to bring forgiveness. As educators however we must recognise that each child has a right to the highest ideals as outlined above.

3.2 Aims

In our sex and relationships education programme we aim to enable our pupils to:

- Know and understand better the physical, emotional and social aspects of human sexual development from conception to old age;
- Appreciate the nature of love, personal relationships marriage and family life;
- Have a positive acceptance of their own sexuality, a sense of self-worth and an ability to relate to others

3.3 Objectives

3.3.1

To offer an acceptable vocabulary and means of expression that can be used without embarrassment to facilitate dialogue with pupils about their current understanding and concerns about sexual matters.

3.3.2

To develop a deeper awareness of human fertility, the constant fertility of the male and the cyclical fertility of the female accompanied by possible associated emotional changes.

3.3.3

To promote an awareness and positive acceptance by each pupil of their own sexuality and the sexuality of others, thus minimising unfounded feelings of anxiety or guilt.

3.3.4

To promote chastity both within and outside marriage, based on a deep respect for the integrity of sexual

intimacy, which involves human beings at their most vulnerable, and promotes the well being of the individuals involved. To appreciate the vocational element of celibacy.

3.3.5

To enable young people to make informed decisions by helping them to determine their own values in the positive moral framework offered by the Catholic Church while being aware of the negative pressures from other sources and how best to cope with them.

3.3.6

To combat sexual exploitation and the misuse of sex both for commercial profit and in personal relationships by highlighting the positive as well as drawing attention to the negative aspects of human sexuality.

3.3.7

To encourage a careful consideration of the biological principles and theological arguments behind the Church's teaching on contraception and family planning.

3.3.8

To develop some understanding and give sensitive consideration to the beliefs and cultures of others with regard to sex and in particular to help with a careful consideration of homosexuality with reference to the Church's teaching.

4. Content of School Sex and Relationships Education Programme

After each point, the relevant teaching context is given.

4.1 Key stage 3 (By the end of the Third Form)

Pupils should be able to:

4.1.1

Understand the process of human reproduction, to know the human life cycle, including the physical and emotional changes that take place during human puberty and adolescence. (Biology and PSHE)

4.1.2

Have an awareness of human fertility - the constant fertility of the male, the cyclical fertility of the female and

the consequent possible emotional changes that the cycle brings. (Biology)

4.1.3

Have a positive self-image and have a respect for themselves and others. (PSHE)

4.1.4

Understand the changes that have taken place and are taking place in their own bodies and those of the opposite sex, to be aware of changing emotions and how to respond to them. (Biology and PSHE)

4.1.5

Appreciate the importance of relationships within and outside the family and to understand their changing nature. (PSHE)

4.1.6

Be aware that no one has the right to abuse another individual whether physically or sexually, and to know that if help is required appropriate agencies are available. (PSHE and RS)

4.1.7

Recognise that sexuality is a gift from God and understand what is meant by chaste behaviour in matters of sexuality. (RS)

4.1.8

Understand why some actions are considered good and others bad and to begin to making informed decisions on matters of personal health well being and safety. (RS and PSHE)

4.1.9

Appreciate that a Christian marriage is fulfilled by having children but that inability to conceive is a possibility; that generosity in marriage can be fulfilled in other ways in the case of sterility. (RS)

4.1.10

Understand that people have the right not to be sexually active and that some people choose to remain single and celibate for a variety of reasons. (RS)

4.1.11

Understand the concepts of stereotyping and recognise its various forms. (PSHE)

4.1.12

Understand the principle of genetic inheritance. (Biology)

4.1.13

Be aware of the existence, nature and methods of transmission of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. (Biology)

4.2 Key stage 4 (by the end of GCSE)

In addition to the points listed at KS3 pupils should be able to:

4.2.1

Understand more fully the biological aspects of human conception, birth and development, the inheritance of gender, and other characteristics including diseases e.g. cystic fibrosis. (Biology)

4.2.2

Understand the basic principles behind the different methods of family planning with related health issues. (RS and Biology)

4.2.3

Appreciate what is involved in relationships, focusing on marriage as a sacrament and the basis of family life. (RS)

4.2.4

Continue to develop a positive attitude towards their own sexuality and towards the adoption of responsible attitudes to sexual behaviour. (PSHE and RS)

4.2.5

Value human life, and to be able to discuss sensitive and controversial issues e.g. contraception, abortion, in-vitro fertilisation, sexual orientation, etc., which require the consideration of attitudes, values, beliefs and morality. (RS)

4.2.6

Accept responsibility for their actions, to understand the importance of the decisions they make and the effects these can have on others. (RS and PSHE)

4.2.7

Be aware that romantic relationships during adolescence are often transitory and may have a destabilising effect on personal development. (PSHE)

4.2.8

Understand and discuss strategies for managing changes in relationships, to be aware of the effects of separation, divorce, bereavement etc. on family life. (PSHE)

4.2.9

Be aware of stereotyping and the influence of the media on self-image and attitudes towards sexuality. (PSHE)

4.2.10

Be informed about relevant British legislation regarding sexual behaviour. (PSHE)

4.2.11

Be aware of the existence of organisations, both statutory and voluntary, which offer support to human relationships e.g. health services, Relate, Life, etc. (PSHE)

4.2.12

Examine celibacy as a valid expression of human sexuality. (RS)

4.2.13

Consolidate understanding of the nature and methods of transmission of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. (Biology)

4.3 Sixth Form:

Within the General RS lessons as well as the Sodality of our Lady and the wider ethos of the School, we seek to offer our students a supportive community environment in which to make the critical transition from adolescence to adulthood. With regard to Sex and Relationships Education this involves a genuine effort to engage the students in a deepening dialogue which respects their growing autonomy and their need to have the freedom to discuss and to explore different approaches critically, as well as to disagree without losing the regard of those who teach them or losing sight of the profound insights of Catholic tradition. We recognise that we are privileged to teach young people at very different stages of personal and sexual development and sensitivity to their vulnerability and fragility has to be the keynote of all our teaching. The importance today of peer group pressure and the diverse messages offered by the media and current fashion as to sexual morals make the endeavour to build up our students' self-esteem and personal integrity ever more critical.

4.3.1 Aims: Our general aims at this stage are to:

4.3.1.1

Integrate what has already been learned in terms of ideas and information into a more critically evaluated and personalised value system.

4.3.1.2

Look in greater depth at the personal, psychological and emotional aspects of our sexual development in personal relationships and encounters, and the values involved.

4.3.1.3

See the Judeo-Christian sexual ethic, and in particular the Catholic tradition, in the wider human context of other value systems.

4.3.2 Objectives: Our specific objectives are to:

4.3.2.1

Examine the ideals of Christian marriage and romantic love in the light of the increasing incidence of marriage breakdown and the difficulties associated with lifelong commitments. (Gen RS)

4.3.2.2

Examine sensitively homosexuality both as an aspect of human rights and as an aspect of personal development and cultural conditions. (Gen RS)

4.3.2.3

Look again at contraception and methods of natural family planning as well as abortion, concentrating on the personal, psychological and emotional aspects of the moral choices involved. (Gen RS and PSHE)

4.3.2.4

Examine sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS and the consequences for sexual behaviour and the future of humanity. (Gen RS and PSHE)

4.3.2.5

Look at the experience of childbirth and responsible parenthood seeing the importance of creative love for human beings. (Gen RS)

4.3.2.6

Highlight the problem of child abuse whether physical, emotional or sexual and the appropriate agencies available to help those involved e.g. Childline. (Gen RS and the School's Designated Child Protection Person)

5 Equal Opportunities

All pupils must be afforded access to the entire content of the Sex and Relationships Education programme outlined above. Mixed classes should usually be used, ensuring that both boys and girls receive the same information and can participate in class discussions. The opportunity for gender specific topics to be dealt with in separate groups should be facilitated where deemed appropriate, e.g. concerning methods of contraception. Whilst the teaching approach

this document will need to take place as required, and at least once a year, to review the programme and in order to provide feedback from the teachers involved and to enable any new teachers to ask questions regarding content and delivery.

External training

Teaching staff involved will be encouraged to avail themselves of any opportunities to increase their knowledge and experience, by attending relevant courses, conferences, workshops provided as INSET by national organisations.

6.3 Methodology and approach, handling of controversial topics.

Whilst teaching the factual content of the Sex and Relationships Education programme above will require a conventional 'teacher-led' approach, the majority of the material should lend itself to a more active participation of pupils through discussion and questions.

Clear ground rules should be laid down at the start of any discussion with regard to appropriate behaviour, use of correct language, respecting the opinion of others etc.

Involvement of all members of the group should be encouraged, particularly an equal input from boys and girls.

The teacher must always be concerned to ensure that the contents and direction of any class exercise is suitable for the age, maturity and ability of the group involved. If questions of an unsuitably explicit/controversial nature arise teachers are advised to avoid addressing the class as a whole. Where appropriate the matter should be discussed with the individual after class, or the pupil should be referred to her/his parent(s).

6.4 Curriculum entitlement

Unless withdrawn by parents, all pupils are entitled to the complete contents of the Sex and Relationships Education programme including coverage of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

6.5 Procedures for reviewing effectiveness of programme

Feedback will be sought from:

- Teachers - those involved in delivering the programme will meet annually to discuss any matters arising from the teaching of the course.

- Parents – who are invited to discuss any of these issues in person or by correspondence.
- Pupils - end of course discussion / questionnaires could be employed. Sixth form students may provide a good source of feedback.

6.6 Criteria for the selection of the resources used

All resources must be selected to ensure that the content and approach is in accordance with the Aims and Objectives of the School's Sex and Relationships Education Policy and conform to the moral and values framework set out above. However it is essential that all resources used should be viewed by the teacher beforehand to ensure that the content is appropriate for the age, maturity and ability of the pupils.

7. Specific issues statements

7.1 Contraceptive and abortion advice, information and referrals

7.1.1 Advice of a personal nature must never be given in the classroom situation, but instead the pupil should be seen on an individual basis. Whilst teachers will be eager to take a pastoral interest in their pupils, they must never give advice on contraception to pupils, not even in a one-to-one situation. Pupils must be encouraged to seek advice from their parents whenever possible.

7.1.2

Whilst the school provides information about contraception and abortion within the context of Catholic education, it does not promote them.

7.1.3

The School and its employees (including the Health Centre staff) do not directly and intentionally provide contraceptive devices or medicines or abortifacients, nor will such materials be stored in the School.

7.1.4

The School's medical officers will follow their own professional code of conduct.

7.1.5

If a pupil of either sex requests of a member of the Health Centre staff contraceptive devices or medicines or abortifacients the employee may, at his or her discretion, refer the pupil to one of the medical officers.

7.2 Confidentiality, the role of teachers and of the qualified medical staff.

Whilst teachers must encourage pupils to be honest about their feelings and create an atmosphere in which pupils can feel secure and uninhibited during discussion sessions, ultimately as teachers, we have a responsibility to parents and therefore as teachers, we cannot promise confidentiality to pupils. This situation should be made clear to any pupil who seeks advice of a personal nature from a member of the teaching staff.

However, the Health Centre staff and medical officers (doctors) have their own professional code of conduct, which includes confidentiality. (See above, 7.1.4)

7.3 Guidelines for relationships between the sexes on the School site

The basic rule is that no inappropriate displays of affection should take place. There are strict guidelines on the places and times that pupils can visit each other in their houses; at no time is a member of the opposite sex allowed in the study bedrooms in the houses. (See School Rule and Regulations)

7.4 Child sexual abuse procedure

Inform the Designated Child Protection Person immediately, as per the School policy.

7.5 Child withdrawal procedures

Under section 241 of the Education Act 1993, parents have the right to withdraw their child from any or all parts of the School's programme of sex education, other than those elements which are contained within the National Curriculum Science Order. This right can be exercised by either parent or by a person who has responsibility for care of the child. Parents do not have to give reasons for their decision, nor do they need to indicate what other arrangements they

intend to make for the child's sex education. The School must comply with the request.

Suggested procedure

1. Parents are informed by letter (from Deputy Head) during the Michaelmas Term of the Third Form, that the Sex and Relationships' Education programme will be commencing and of their right of withdrawal.
2. Parents who request withdrawal are asked voluntarily to indicate their reasons, so that any misunderstandings about the nature of the education provided can be resolved.
3. If these are not resolved, the pupil is withdrawn from the appropriate classes.

7.6 Complaints procedure

Any complaints received by teachers with regard to the School's Sex and Relationships' Education programme should be passed on to the programme co-ordinators and to the School's Complaints Co-ordinator.

7.7 Procedures for the involvement of health professionals and visiting speakers in the programme

Input from health professionals or representatives from voluntary organisations e.g. Life, Relate, Chastity Challenge Team, is to be encouraged. However this must complement the role of the teacher not replace it.

Guidelines:

- Planning for a visiting speaker should be done well in advance and with the knowledge of the appropriate co-ordinator.
- The content and approach of a visiting speaker's input must be determined beforehand and ensured to be in accordance with the aims, objectives and moral values set out in this policy.
- The class teacher should introduce the visitor, be present throughout the class session and provide feedback as necessary.

8. Working with Parents

Downside recognises that parents are principally responsible for helping their children to cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up and in preparing them for the challenges and

responsibilities sexual maturity brings. We see the role of the school as complementing and supporting the role of parents. This statement will be available for parents to read and the school welcomes comments and concerns from individual parents who are free to discuss this with relevant staff at any time.

9. Dissemination of the Policy

Copies of this policy once completed will be distributed to: -

- * Downside Governing Body
- * Teaching Staff
- * Chaplaincy Team
- * Health Centre Staff
- * Medical Officers

10. Procedures for Monitoring and Evaluating this Policy

All feedback from governors, teachers, parents and pupils (see details above) will be considered at the annual policy review meeting.

Revised January 2011

Appendix:

Planning for the Delivery of the SRE Programme

First, Second and Third Forms:

The School should provide for SRE tutors, in sympathy with the Catholic approach to such matters, to deliver, via the tutorial and PSHE programme, the PSHE elements of the SRE programme for Key Stage 3. There would ideally be a male tutor and a female tutor. (**Action: APG, ARH**)

The SRE tutor should liaise with the Heads of Theology and Biology over the delivery of the RS and Biology elements of the SRE programme. **(Action: SRE tutor, HFW, AJP)**

The PSHE elements of the SRE programme are delivered in tutor periods through the year, and the content of the programme is the immediate responsibility of the PSHE Co-ordinator. **(Action: HsMs, SRE tutor, RME)**

Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Forms:

The PSHE elements of the SRE programme for Key Stage 4 and beyond should be delivered through presentations to year groups in tutor periods (e.g. Saturdays) in the Michaelmas and Lent Terms, and in year group talks in Houses. Given the sensitive nature of such talks, the HsM should always be present, and any guest speaker would have to be in sympathy with the Catholic approach to SRE, as detailed in this policy. **(Action: APGM, RME)**

Other elements of the programme should be delivered in RS and Biology lessons, with the PSHE Co-ordinator liaising with the Heads of Theology and Biology **(Action: RME, HLW, AJP)**

All levels:

Ensure schemes of work for RS, Biology, and PSHE incorporate the relevant aspects of the SRE programme. **(Action: AJP, RME, HFW)**

Other considerations:

1. There is a need for INSET for all staff on the School's SRE policy, and on how to approach any matters raised by pupils.
2. It would be desirable to have presentations for parents on the content of the School's SRE policy, and the approach to its implementation.

Policy reviewed August 2011 and confirmed as the current Policy.

Dom Leo Maidlow Davis