

# ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC GRAMMAR SCHOOL

## SEX EDUCATION POLICY

### Aims of Sex Education

- to support the parents as they are the primary educators in this field
- to provide a well balanced, comprehensive programme which, as well as providing the 'Facts of Life', also fulfils the requirement of the 1988 Education Reform Act in that it :

"promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society"

and

"prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life"

As a Catholic school we approach these aims within the framework of a Christian, Catholic education, so we also aspire

"to engender growth in self respect and self worth, recognising that each of us is created in the image of God."

### Objectives

- to understand that love is central to and the basis of meaningful relationships
- to explore the meaning and value of life and give some appreciation of the values of family life
- to enable pupils to reflect on their relationships and recognise the qualities that enable relationships to grow and develop positively
- to have some understanding of and to give sensitive consideration to the values, beliefs and cultures of others
- to provide a forum where pupils can share their concerns and offer an environment where they know that they will be listened to sensitively
- to enable pupils to have some understanding of their bodies, including growth and change, their emotional development and reproductive physiology
- to enable pupils to communicate with health professionals effectively and with confidence
- to enable pupils to recognise that they are responsible for the decisions they make and the consequences of these decisions
- to help with careful consideration of family planning and other sexual health issues
- to help pupils to develop their critical faculties and be aware of the values conveyed by their peers, society and the media and to give them strategies to resist these pressures where necessary
- to correct misinformation

### The role of the Religious Education department in Sex Education

Although the RE Department is not responsible for the 'Education for Living' programme, where Sex Education is formally taught, it underpins, supports and enriches it.

- Spiritual development involves helping pupils to grow in self awareness and in awareness of their responses to experience in the light of faith, thus contributing to the self knowledge that is a necessary part of a personal freedom and growth.

- Moral development involves helping pupils to form a moral conscience, maturity and enabling them to make decisions about moral behaviour.
- Much of the work of the department focuses on the wider aspects of human relationships and the respect we owe to each person as a unique creation of God.
- Where human sexuality does form part of the syllabus it is never discussed in a vacuum, but is presented as an essential feature of interpersonal relationships, growing out of the friendship, love and respect found between a woman and a man. It is set within the clear, moral framework of the Catholic Church, with strong emphasis on the stability of marriage, family life and the responsibility of parenthood.

### **Equal Opportunities**

All the pupils at St. Michael's are entitled to a comprehensive, well balanced programme of sex education, within the moral, ethical, spiritual guidelines of the Catholic Church, except where her parents exercise the right to withdraw their daughter from all or part of the sex education provided, granted under Section 241 of the Education Act 1993.

### **Organisation**

Anna O'Sullivan, as Education for Living co-ordinator, and Paul Moloney, the Head of RE, are responsible for the planning and delivery of the sex education programme.

Anna O'Sullivan will deal with the reproductive physiology and sexual health aspects whilst the RE department will concentrate on education for relationships, although it is recognised that such a dichotomy is unrealistic. In fact, these issues could arise in any subject therefore all staff are asked to be sensitive when dealing with these matters.

### **Training**

Staff are encouraged to undertake such courses as seem appropriate when the opportunities arise.

### **Methodology and Approach**

Based mostly on discussion with in-house resources derived from various sources – including video, worksheets and inviting professionals to come and speak.

All controversial topics such as contraception and abortion, are dealt with having regard to the teaching of the Church, but also from the point of view that our students need to have a knowledge of the views of society and the facts with which to make informed decisions, we endeavour to approach all such subjects with sensitivity to and compassion for the situation and the individuals involved.

### **Specific Issues**

**Contraception** is taught in Year 10, including the principles behind fertility awareness, family planning and natural methods, in the context of the teaching of the Church. Artificial methods of contraception, and the advantages and disadvantages of each method are discussed, giving information only.

No advice is given to any individual girl. If any teacher is approached about the topic by a student, the student should be encouraged to talk to her parents or to Mrs Sheehy.

**Confidentiality** is important. We would hope to create within the classroom an environment of support where everyone felt comfortable about expressing their opinion without fear of it being ridiculed in class or discussed by others in an inappropriate manner. If a student comes to ask for help or advice from any member of staff it should be made clear that any disclosures may have to be passed onto Mr Ward.

**Child Sexual Abuse Procedures** are referred to Mrs Sheehy in the first instance, and to Mrs O’Sullivan as her deputy.

**Child Withdrawal Procedure.** Parents have the right to withdraw their child from Sex Education lessons. However, we hope that once we have explained our rationale and the way in which these subjects are dealt with in the classroom, parents’ minds will be put at ease. If a child is withdrawn then alternative arrangements will be made, where the student will research into alternative Health Education topics..

**Complaints** would be referred to Mrs O’Sullivan as Assistant Head in charge of the Pastoral Curriculum, or to Mr Ward.

In the Sixth Form, sensitive issues pertaining to Sex Education will always be covered in single gender groups.

#### **Procedures for the involvement of visitors and health professionals**

If we invite people with specialist expertise or knowledge into school to deal with Sex Education topics we ensure that they understand the Catholic nature of the school and ask that they deal with their subject within this framework.

**Support for those with HIV** would be as for the support of any student within the school with physical disabilities or emotional problems. This is outlined in our Pastoral Policy.

**Working with parents.** The aims of our sex education policy are outlined in the prospectus, and all Year 7 parents are invited to a meeting with Mrs O’Sullivan and Mr Moloney at which the whole programme is explained, including how it fits into the Pastoral Curriculum. Questions and suggestions are invited.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Girls are asked to complete review forms at the end of a year or unit of work in Key Stages 3 and 4. The Sex Education Policy and programme are reviewed annually by the Governors. Pastoral Managers’ meetings are held four times a year when the programmes relating to Sex Education are reviewed and discussed.

**Anna O’Sullivan**

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