

Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery



Policy for HRSE (Human Relationships and Sex Education)

March 2024

1. Vision and Mission

‘Learning and Growing as Children of God’

Vision for Human Relationships and Sex Education

At Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we are inspired by Jesus to be the very best we can be. We look after one another and show respect and love through our relationships with one another. Jesus is invited into our hearts. In the Beatitudes, Jesus invites us to lead a full life with him by explaining what makes people blessed or happy. This is about understanding how loving our neighbour enables us to be happy too. Therefore, having a good relationship with ourselves and the other people in our lives makes us grow and flourish and we respect that everyone is a unique and beautiful part of God’s creation. We are all children of God, called to grow in love for him through the person of Jesus Christ and to spread the Good News through the action of the Holy Spirit.

2. Procedures

The following groups have been consulted as part of producing this policy.

- staff - during meetings in school
- governing body – through their statutory duties and committee meetings
- parents – requests to comment electronically on the content of our HRSE curriculum
- Diocesan Education Service – attendance at training events
- Students – in classes

Consultancy was completed during the summer term 2021. The content of the school’s HRSE curriculum was shared with the stakeholders above and a period of time given to comment. The resulting comments were incorporated, where possible, into the school’s approach, although the statutory content of the school’s responsibilities were not changed due to stakeholder comments.

In consultation with the Governing Body, the policy will be implemented from September 2021 and reviewed every three years, by the Head teacher, HRSE subject leader, the Governing Body and school Staff. The next review date is June 2024.

The policy will be circulated to all members of the Governing Body and all members of staff. The school website contains a statement about HRSE teaching and details of where to obtain a full copy of the policy upon request. The Education Service will be sent a copy of the school’s HRSE policy and it is the duty of the Governing Body to ensure that this is up to date.

3. Rationale

As a primary school in the Diocese of Lancaster Education Service, we use the term Human Relationships and Sex Education (HRSE) as it believes that relationships education is about all aspects of growing a fulfilled and happy life, sexual education is a dimension of this greater whole.

The defining belief of Christianity is that God took on human form. This endows the human form with an extraordinary dignity that goes beyond that of all other forms of life and shows that humanity alone can embrace this relationship with God. Therefore, our relationship with our own bodies is not casual but infused with the Holy Spirit. Any teaching about love and sexual relationships in school must be rooted in this belief which is expressed in the Church’s teaching about relationships, marriage, sex and family life. The Church offers education to young people as it is part of complete human formation. Education about human love is no less a part of a Catholic school’s responsibility than teaching about mathematics or English. At Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we teach young people about how to form relationships, including understanding loving relationships and acknowledging that children’s first experience of love is in the home. We encourage children from the earliest age to recognise that they are all children of God and that each person shares a God given dignity. As children mature, we encourage them to follow the example of Jesus and live lives inspired by the Gospel virtues, enabling them to follow His commandment to “Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31). This is the

basis for all relationships in our school. Teaching about relationships in our school is supported by Christian virtue teaching as outlined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in line with 'Fit for Mission? Schools'.

The Department for Education in 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (2019) states that,

"To embrace the challenges of creating a happy and successful adult life, pupils need knowledge that will enable them to make informed decisions about their well-being, health and relationships and to build their self-efficacy. Pupils can also put this knowledge into practice as they develop the capacity to make sound decisions when facing risks, challenges and complex contexts. Everyone faces difficult situations in their lives. These subjects can support young people to develop resilience, to know how and when to ask for help, and to know where to access support." P.8

The Diocese recognises the value of these curriculum aims. However, Catholic schools also have regard for the spiritual welfare of the students and recognise that to know and love God brings lasting happiness.

4. Statutory framework

The statutory framework replaces Statutory Guidance: 'Sex and Relationships Education Guidance' (2000). The DfE states that it intends to update the guidance every three years.

The statutory guidance is available from the DfE (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>). It should be read in conjunction with this Diocesan guidance and the following documents.

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (statutory guidance)
- [Respectful School Communities: Self Review and Signposting Tool](#) (a tool to support a whole school approach that promotes respect and discipline)
- [Behaviour and Discipline in Schools](#) (advice for schools, including advice for appropriate behaviour between pupils)
- [Equality Act 2010 and schools](#)
- [SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#) (statutory guidance)
- [Alternative Provision](#) (statutory guidance)
- [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools](#) (advice for schools)
- [Preventing and Tackling Bullying](#) (advice for schools, including advice on cyberbullying)
- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools](#) (advice for schools)
- [The Equality and Human Rights Commission Advice and Guidance](#) (provides advice on avoiding discrimination in a variety of educational contexts)
- [Promoting Fundamental British Values as part of SMSC in schools](#) (guidance for maintained schools on promoting basic important British values as part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC))
- [SMSC requirements for independent schools](#) (guidance for independent schools on how they should support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development).
- [National Citizen Service](#) guidance for schools

Purpose of the Statutory Guidance

The guidance intends to help children and young people develop. The knowledge and attributes they gain will support their own, and others', wellbeing and attainment and help young people to become successful and happy adults who make a meaningful contribution to society. The Diocese of Lancaster agrees with these aims and seeks to support them through the appropriate development of the HRSE provision.

The table summarises statutory obligations:

Relationships Education	Relationships and Sex Education	Health Education
All schools providing primary education, including all-through schools and middle schools (includes schools as set out in the Summary section).	All schools providing secondary education, including all-through schools and middle schools (see Summary section of statutory guidance).	All maintained schools including schools with a sixth form, academies, free schools, non-maintained special schools and alternative provision, including pupil referral units.
		The statutory requirement to provide Health Education does not apply to independent schools – PSHE is already compulsory as independent schools must meet the Independent School Standards as set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Independent schools, however, may find the principles in the guidance on Health Education helpful in planning an age-appropriate curriculum
The statutory requirements do not apply to sixth form colleges, 16-19 academies or Further Education (FE) colleges, although we would encourage them to support students by offering these subjects. These settings may find the principles helpful, especially in supporting pupils in the transition to FE.		

Prior to children transitioning to Secondary School, we ensure that children have had full opportunity to explore relationships education. We ensure that they are knowledgeable about the changes that occur in their bodies when they grow into puberty and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle during this time. We do not teach sex education at Alston Lane Catholic Primary School, and Nursery. Instead, we acknowledge the importance of parental input and their role in speaking to their children about sex when it is deemed appropriate by the parent.

5. Virtues and Values

Gospel virtues and values underpin the HRSE curriculum. The Christian tradition describes behaviours or habits that lead to happiness, human flourishing and a closer relationship with God as virtues. These virtues are described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and fall into two groups. The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity (sometimes love is used instead) are about developing the habits of being open to the work of the Holy Spirit and developing a deeper relationship with God through living a balanced and happy, good life. The cardinal virtues of practical wisdom (prudence), justice, fortitude and temperance help people develop habits of reason, fairness, emotional resilience and self-mastery. They are human virtues and, as such, are part of the development of people of all faiths or none as they learn how to flourish, thrive and to have a life supported by strong and caring relationships. The cardinal virtues are drawn from the teachings of Plato and Aristotle and are held in common with people of many faiths and secular beliefs. St. Thomas Aquinas attributes the theological virtues as having their foundation in God, they complete the cardinal virtues and are the way people can reach “the abundant life” (John 10:10).

At Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we live out the Gospel values shared in the Beatitudes, throughout school by adults modelling Gospel values and virtues, and encouraging children to do the same. Children are fully involved in their learning and are aware of their progress in knowledge and know that they are responsible for their moral behaviour throughout their time at school. Children are encouraged to say thank you to God, to be happy and cheerful and to care about other people. They know how Jesus cared for others and are encouraged to apply this in their own behaviour. As a school we value kindness and celebrate acts of kindness in class and during assemblies. Children in Key Stage Two are encouraged to develop a

deeper understanding of what is moral behaviour and be able to say why this is important for personal happiness and for a closer relationship with God. Children of all ages are supported to learn how prayer enables them to make space for God in their lives, offering opportunities for reflection and growth. By the end of Year 6, children should be able to explain some behaviour choices by reference to their beliefs and values, for example, by referring to Jesus' teaching about forgiveness.

6. The Aim and Objectives of HRSE.

The aim of HRSE is part of our aim to educate the complete human person. This is expressed in *Fit for mission? Schools* (2009).

The fundamental needs of the human person are the focus of Catholic education – intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual, and eschatological (Our eternal destiny). These fundamental needs can only be truly fulfilled through a rich and living encounter with the deepest truths about God and the human person.

This is why Christ and His Gospel must be the foundation of the educational project of each school and college, because He is 'the perfect Man in whom all human values find their fullest perfection' (Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*).

Therefore, the Catholic school or college is called to keep the Gospel whole and alive amongst pupils, families, and staff.

HRSE should deepen the following areas of understanding:

- To develop self respect and love of self.
- To invite young people to develop and deepen a loving relationship with God.
- To invite young people to understand that their life has a purpose.
- To invite young people to develop and deepen relationships with each other based on mutual respect and care and to understand this can be an expression of God's love.
- To foster an understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church about how to live a full life, a life of virtue, and the place of human sexuality in living a full life, marriage and parenthood.
- A strong awareness of their own safety and the nature of consent.
- To have an understanding of the law in England about Equality and Marriage, appropriate to age and maturity.

HRSE will develop attitudes, personal and social skills and knowledge and understanding:

- We will seek to develop attitudes of awe and wonder for the gift and beauty of self, respect for each other as children of God and rejoice in the goodness of God's creation.
- We will seek to develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity in all.
- We will seek to enable children to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.
- We will encourage children to learn about expressing their own emotions and being respectful of the emotions and behaviours of others.
- We will encourage the whole school to be like a loving family recognising God as a merciful and generous father as Jesus taught in the Lord's prayer.
- We will encourage everyone in the school to recognise their part in the school family and work together for reconciliation when relationships in the school falter.
- We will encourage everyone in the school to value humility, mercy and compassion and to respond with empathy to the problems of others.
- We will develop children's knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for their own safety.
- We will develop children's experience of what it is to be happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and gratification and value patience.
- We will teach children about the media and their choices, about what to watch, what games to play, what rules apply and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.
- We will support children when relationships in their lives are challenging and teach them that there

are people in school who will listen if they are experiencing changes that make them frightened or uncomfortable.

- We will foster an atmosphere in school which celebrates the work of the Trinity through the life of the school and its relationship with the Church.
- We will teach children about the beauty of the Church's teaching about love and God's love for them which is shared in the Sacraments.
- We will sensitively share the Church's teaching about the importance of marriage and family life as a way to live in loving relationships with others and with God.
- We will encourage children to understand difference and be mindful of people who are vulnerable to discrimination because of their personal or cultural characteristics.

7. Inclusion

At Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we identify that young people mature in different ways. Our teaching about relationships and sexuality is respectful of each child's starting point, their faith, culture and sexual orientation. Lessons are framed by this understanding and young people encouraged to respect difference and develop an approach of dialogue.

8. Equality

The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery, endeavours to do its best for all of the pupils, irrespective of ability (physical and mental), race, ethnicity, nationality, maternity, pregnancy, sex, gender identity or orientation or whether they are looked after children.

The School's equality responsibilities can be seen in the school's policy on our website.

The primary mission of Catholic schools is to alleviate any disadvantage. In this way, we ensure that access to the HRSE curriculum is the same for every child, regardless of SEN, disability or other learning difficulty.

Teachers differentiate and amend their teaching practices to cater for the needs of every individual in school. This may include the use of specific targets in Education Health Care Plans, monitored by the school's SENCO.

A clear and consistent message about human dignity is conveyed throughout school life by staff, students and those who support the work of the school, such as governors. Difference is celebrated and explored in the context of the uniqueness of God's creation.

Governors at Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery understand the implications of the DfE's 2017 guidance, 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'. The guidance covers what sexual violence and harassment is, schools' and colleges' legal responsibilities, a whole school approach to safeguarding and child protection and how to respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Sadly, students can believe that sexual violence and harassment are just part of growing up. We challenge this in our teaching, when relevant and appropriately to the age of the children. For example, in a primary context, children learn the nature of personal privacy, to respect their own bodies. For example, children in Key Stage 1 learn about 'private parts' through the NSPCC video 'Pantosaurus'.

All teaching in HRSE, including that which covers areas around the protected characteristics, must be sensitive to the age, cultural background and family experiences of students. The Catholic view of human dignity challenges the cultural assumptions that can underpin prejudices, such as racism, sexism and religious discrimination. We challenge homophobia and other infringements of human dignity.

The DfE's guidance makes specific mention of teaching about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender characteristics, which it shortens to LGBT. The guidance states,

"At the point at which schools consider it appropriate to teach their pupils about LGBT, they should

ensure that this content is fully integrated into their programmes of study for this area of the curriculum rather than delivered as a stand-alone unit or lesson. Schools are free to determine how they do this, and we expect all pupils to have been taught LGBT content at an appropriate point as part of this area of the curriculum."

At Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery, we address questions about sexuality and gender as and when they arise. Our school policies identify all protected characteristics as possible triggers for aggressive or bullying behaviours. We train all staff to support children who are asking questions about themselves or others in these areas, in partnership with their families, and they know the legal requirements incumbent on the school with specific reference to sex or gender requirements. The dignity of each child is central to our care and we support any questioning child and their families through a culture of listening and seeing them as a person. We do not rush to label but offer, children and their families, time to discuss and explore what is best for them as individuals within our school community."

9. Programme of study

A revised programme of study has been prepared to support educators in our family of schools as they enable our young people to grow in faith and understanding of themselves, their relationship with God and with one another. The Department for Education has prepared a statutory programme for 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' which will be a compulsory requirement from September 2020. The Diocese of Lancaster began working on Human Relationships and Sex Education (HRSE) in 2016.

The intent of the programme of study is to encourage young people to recognise their interior beauty, their dignity as a human and through this to understand and value the worth of others. We hope that this builds on the experience of the home where, as children, we all experience our first expressions of love and form our early relationships. The challenge in school life is to develop this not just in an academic sense, but as a lived expression of belief ultimately, an invitation to hear the Good News.

"We must wonder! We must create an environment of wonder! We must create a climate of wonder! This task is closest to the family... Wonder is needed so that beauty might enter into human life, into society and the nation... We need to marvel at everything that is found in man." Pope St. John Paul II

Creating a climate of wonder can seem a far cry from the modern world our schools are called to serve, though this is our calling as educators in the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Lancaster. Engaging with the Church's teaching about human loving enables us to share with our young people the wonder of human life and the happiness that is waiting for us in Jesus. As always, this is an invitation, a way to deepen understanding of what it means to be fully human.

The Programme of Study places the Diocese of Lancaster programme next to the statutory obligation it fulfils. Any additional material in HRSE is written in italics so it is easy to identify. Areas from the statutory plan not covered in the HRSE framework are listed at the end of the booklet. From 2020, OfSTED will inspect the new 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' and the school's RE inspection will continue to examine provisions in HRSE.

HRSE will be taught alongside the school's PSHE, RE and Science curriculum. Clear ground rules for sensitive discussions will be established with participants and parents will be informed when lessons on puberty and 'Growing Up' take place in school. Parents of Year 6 children will also be informed when specific teaching on human reproduction is covered, through the 'This is My Body' scheme.

Other elements of the statutory HRSE curriculum are covered in computing (online safety), PSHE (basic first aid) and science (health education).

10. Parents

The Church recognises parents as the first educators of their children. The school should support parents in this task. The role of the school should be that of assisting and completing the work of parents, furnishing children and adolescents with an evaluation of *“sexuality as value and task of the whole person, created male and female in the image of God”*. (Educational Guidance in Human Love (1983) Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education n69) Children’s first experience of relationships and love are in the home. At our schools we seek to work with parents and support them as their children grow and begin to develop their own character as well as experiencing changes in their physical appearance. Parents have been consulted about this policy before it was ratified by the governing body. This was done through sharing the draft policy on the school website and asking for parental comments via an online response form.

Right to be excused from sex education (commonly referred to as the right to withdraw)

Parents have the right to request that their child not participate in some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE. Before granting any such request, the Headteacher will discuss the application with parents and ensure that they understand the nature and purpose of the curriculum in a Catholic context. A discussion will follow, as appropriate, involving the child to ensure that their wishes are understood and to clarify the nature and purpose of the curriculum. Schools will record and document this process. The class teacher and Headteacher will be involved in this process, with outcomes recorded in the pupil’s records.

In order to involve parents, as much as possible, in the school’s delivery of HRSE, we will share the programme of study and other related resources, as appropriate. Information about visits and visitors will always be shared ahead of school events, giving sufficient time to withdraw consent. At times of particular sensitivity, such as puberty, additional parental support will be sought and parents invited into school to seek clarification if they require it.

11. Teaching and Assessing HRSE

The HRSE subject leader, subject ambassador and the Headteacher/SLT, will be responsible for curriculum delivery and monitoring of the programme. A Foundation Governor has also been appointed to oversee HRSE.

Class teachers and other suitable support staff will be responsible for teaching the programme in the classroom. By extension, the Headteacher will develop themes during assemblies and worship opportunities. All staff are involved in fostering attitudes, living Gospel virtues and shaping behaviour based on a Christian understanding of how to lead a good life. Staff are called to be role models of the school’s ethos in their relationships with other staff members, their conduct towards parents and their care for the children in the school. Staff who are not Catholic themselves must conduct their behaviour in school in accordance with the vision and mission of the school.

Teaching and learning about human relationships will be part of the life of the school. However, the programme of study will be taught through cross curricular dimensions where appropriate, such as RE, science and computing. Sometimes, the children’s learning will be best supported by using other agencies, such as the school nurse, or other visitors to school. Such visitors will be guided to read the protocol for visitors at Alston Lane Catholic Primary School and Nursery and agree to follow its instruction.

Assessment forms part of the statutory framework. The HRSE programme includes a self-audit for schools. Best practice states that each year the Diocesan self –audit is used to monitor all aspects of HRSE. Governors will use the CES RSE audit tools to monitor their knowledge and understanding of this area. The HRSE framework and the elements of the statutory framework not covered by HRSE are monitored and assessed through whole school planning, written pieces of work, teacher’s notes on discussions and targeted lesson evaluations. On occasion, the school uses questionnaires to evaluate students’ sense of well-being and may use written or practical assessments where appropriate.

12. Dealing with difficult questions

The Governing Body desires that HRSE lessons take place in a positive framework, where students experience a growing appreciation for well-being, and that of others, and a deeper understanding that the Church teaches a path of the wholeness of mind, body and spirit. Part of this is creating an atmosphere where questions can be asked openly, knowing that their questions will be answered and understanding that staff or other students will not judge these questions. It is vital; therefore, that teachers invest time in creating this framework of mutual trust and care while respecting personal information. The HRSE subject leader must be given access to train and support to facilitate teachers to enable such discussions by creating carefully negotiated ground rules and distancing strategies. The Department for Education (2000) offers the following guidelines for dealing with questions.

Teachers should establish clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole-class setting. Many teachers are concerned about responding to unexpected questions or comments from pupils in a whole-class situation. Having a set of ground rules should reduce the chances of this happening, but teachers will need support and training so that they prepare for the unexpected.

For example: if a question is too personal, the teacher should remind the pupil of the ground rules. If the pupil needs further support, the teacher can refer her or him to the appropriate person, such as a school counsellor, school nurse, helpline, or an outside agency or service.

If a teacher doesn't know the answer to a question, it is essential to acknowledge this, and to suggest that the pupil or teacher or both together research the subject later.

If a problem is too explicit, feels too old for a pupil, is inappropriate for the whole class, or raises concerns about sexual abuse, the teacher should acknowledge it and promise to attend to it later on an individual basis. In this way, the pupil will feel they have received respectful treatment, but the rest of the class will not have to listen to personal experience or inappropriate information. To maintain trust and respect the teacher must remember to talk with the pupil later.

If a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of sexual abuse, they should follow the school's child protection procedures.¹

[¹ Sex and Relationships Guidance, 4.5 'Dealing with questions' 0116/2000]

13. Supporting children and young people deemed to be at risk.

Sensitive subjects in HRSE always need to be framed so that the young people who are participating know that there is pastoral support if any of the issues discussed make them feel the need to talk further or share confidential information. This should always be done within the safeguarding framework of the school and it is paramount that all staff teaching HRSE have up to date safeguarding professional development.

Questions asked by students that are a cause for concern for the teacher, for example because of their explicit or graphic content, should be addressed in accordance with the school's safeguarding policy and confidentiality procedures. The school's safeguarding policy can be found on the school website.

Headteacher: Mr M FitzGibbon

Website: www.alstonlane.lancs.sch.uk