

NOTRE DAME SENIOR SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

NOTRE
DAME
SCHOOL



1. Defining Relationship and Sex Education (RSE)

The DfE guidance states that “Children and young people need knowledge and skills that will enable them to make informed and ethical decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships. High quality, evidence-based teaching of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) can help prepare pupils for the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life, and can promote their moral, social, mental and physical development. Effective teaching will support young people to cultivate positive characteristics including resilience, self-worth, self-respect, honesty, integrity, courage, kindness, and trustworthiness. Effective teaching will support prevention of harms by helping young people understand and identify when things are not right.”’ (***Department of Education (DfE) Guidance 15 July 2025***)

RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) is essential for lifelong skills and support surrounding sexual, moral, psychological and emotional wellbeing, for the students at Notre Dame School. We aim to equip our students to identify and establish healthy, stable and loving relationships with mutual respect and positive values. We also aim to work closely with parents/carers and outside agencies to keep up to date on changes and inform parents when necessary. Parents may also choose to opt out of the RSE for their daughter at any point until their daughter is three terms away from her sixteenth birthday – she will then be given the choice of receiving RSE independently of parental consent.

In the Senior School RSE will be delivered through the PSHE programme as well as in Science and Theology lessons through the National Framework. Notre Dame School values and encourages the contribution and input of Governors and parents/carers to create a whole school environment for the teaching and learning of RSE. The School has the same high expectations of the quality of pupils’ work and teaching in RSE as for other curriculum areas.

Therefore, RSE at Notre Dame is important as it:

- celebrates the dignity and uniqueness of each individual, made and loved by God.
- is an entitlement for all young people.
- is a way to encourage positive growth mindsets.
- supports wider social groups including the community and all types of family.
- encourages self-respect and respect for others and tolerance.
- creates a safe environment in which to discuss serious or controversial topics around RSE.
- fosters more confident adults.

2. Statutory requirements

All schools must provide RSE as part of the basic curriculum and must meet the requirements of National Curriculum Science. RSE involves teaching children about reproduction, sexuality and sexual health. It does not promote early sexual activity or any particular sexual orientation. Some parts of RSE are compulsory - these are set out in the September 2026 DfE Guidance for schools document.

3. Rationale

‘I have come that you might have life and have it to the full’ (John 10:10)

The belief in the unique dignity of the human person made in the image and likeness of God underpins the approach to all education in a Catholic school.

Following the guidance of the Bishops of England and Wales and as advocated by the DfE (and the Welsh Assembly Government) RSE is firmly embedded in the PSHEE framework as it is concerned with nurturing human wholeness and integral to the physical, spiritual, emotional, moral, social and intellectual development of pupils. It is centred on Christ's vision of being human as good news and will be positive and prudent, showing the potential for development, while enabling the dangers and risks involved to be understood and appreciated.

All RSE will be in accordance with the Company of Mary Our Lady Educational Project. It will emphasise the central importance of all pupils having a fundamental right to have their life respected. It will also prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.

4. Organisation and content

Following the DfE guidance, Notre Dame Senior School aims to include the following elements in our age appropriate programme:

4.1 Attitudes and values:

- learning the importance of values and individual conscience and moral considerations;
- learning the value of family life, marriage, and stable and loving relationships for the nurture of children;
- learning the value of respect, love and care;
- exploring, considering and understanding moral dilemmas; and developing critical thinking as part of decision-making.

4.2 Personal and social skills:

- learning to manage emotions and relationships confidently and sensitively;
- developing self-respect and empathy for others;
- learning to make choices based on an understanding of difference and with an absence of prejudice;
- developing an appreciation of the consequences of choices made;
- managing conflict; and
- learning how to recognise and avoid exploitation and abuse.
- Develop a positive and functional moral framework.

4.3 Knowledge and understanding:

- learning and understanding physical development at appropriate stages;
- understanding human sexuality, reproduction, sexual health, emotions and relationships;
- learning about contraception and the range of local and national sexual health advice, contraception and support services;
- learning the reasons for delaying sexual activity, and the benefits to be gained from such delay; and
- the avoidance of unplanned pregnancy.
- know how the law applies to sexual relationships.

A year by year breakdown of the subjects taught under RSE and PSHE more widely, can be found in the Senior School's PSHE Policy.

5. Leadership and Monitoring

Monitoring and Evaluation of RSE is the responsibility of the PSHE Co-ordinator and Assistant Head Pastoral.

The school sets out to establish a set of ground rules for all PSHE lessons to ensure that teachers create a safe environment in which they do not feel embarrassed or anxious about unintended or unexpected questions or comments from pupils. Ground rules for Notre Dame include:

- no one (teacher or student) will have to answer a personal question;
- no one will be forced to take part in a discussion;
- only the correct names for body parts will be used; and
- meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way.

Most of the RSE at Notre Dame School will take place within PSHE lessons. Tutors will generally deliver the PSHE curriculum with support from professionals (where appropriate). RSE lessons are set within the wider context of the PSHE schemes of work and are age appropriate. The biological and physical aspects of RSE such as puberty, reproduction and sexually transmitted Infections are also covered within the Science National Curriculum and delivered by staff in the Science department.

Materials used in Notre Dame must be in accordance with the PSHE framework and the law. Inappropriate images should not be used nor should explicit material not directly related to explanation.

Health professionals, social workers, youth workers, peer educators, and visitors all have a part to play in delivering RSE and should abide by the school's policy and compliment rather than replace lessons.

Any RSE lesson may consider questions or issues that some students will find sensitive. At Notre Dame School, we aim to provide an open and safe forum for discussion or questions, which will be answered honestly. Effective RSE should enable and encourage young people to talk to a trusted adult. It is desirable, although not always possible, that that person should be their parent or carer. The law allows health professionals to see and, in some circumstances, to treat young people confidentially, and part of this process includes counselling and discussion about talking to parents. Students should be made aware of services available to them regarding RSE during the topic area.

If staff are told any confidential information, then the Safeguarding policy will be followed appropriately and the Designated Safeguarding Lead informed. In terms of confidentiality, Teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality and must report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

In the case of a teacher learning that an under 16-year-old is having, or contemplating having, sexual intercourse then the school/ staff member must ensure that:

- wherever possible, the young person is persuaded to talk to their parent or carer;
- any child protection issues are addressed; and
- that the child has been adequately counselled and informed about contraception, including precise information about where young people can access contraception and advice services the teacher who receives the information believes there is a child protection issue to be addressed, they should refer the case to a designated teacher for child protection should also make clear to the pupil that they cannot guarantee confidentiality the teacher should ensure that the pupil understands that if confidentiality has to be broken they will be informed first.

Key focus areas for teaching:

- Students should be prepared for puberty.
- Girls should be prepared for menstruation.

- Students need access to, and precise information about, confidential contraceptive information, advice and services.
- Students need to be aware of the moral and personal dilemmas involved in abortion and know how to access a relevant agency if necessary.
- Students need to be aware of the risks of STIs including HIV and know about prevention, diagnosis and treatment.
- Students need to know not just what safer sex is and why it is important but also how to negotiate it with a partner.

6. Assessment

There will be verbal, written or peer assessment of knowledge and understanding, interpersonal skills, and attitudes at the end of the topic. The results and outcomes will be analysed to see if extra input, support or intervention is needed.

7. Inclusion

We will respond to parental requests and concerns individually but the ideal is to aim to make all lessons inclusive and for students to feel free to discuss their own cultural and religious views regarding RSE. For students with Special Educational Needs, the same values of inclusion will apply and we will offer provision appropriate to the particular needs of our students. Some pupils will be more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation than their peers, and others may be confused about what is acceptable public behaviour. These children will need help to develop skills to reduce the risks of being abused and exploited, and to learn what sorts of behaviour are, and are not, acceptable. This will be provided, if necessary, through the school SENCO.

8. Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation

We aim to deal honestly and sensitively with issues of sexual orientation, according to the 2010 Equality Act. The school will aim to help all students feel that RSE is relevant to them and sensitive to their needs. Any related issues of homophobic bullying will be dealt with according to the school's bullying policy procedure.

9. Role of parents and their Right of Withdrawal of Students from Relationships and Sex Education Sex and Relationship Education

We recognise that parents are the key people in:

- teaching their children about relationships and sex;
- maintaining the culture and ethos of the family;
- helping their children cope with the emotional and physical aspects of growing up; and
- preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities that sexual maturity brings.

Parents will be informed when sensitive RSE talks or lessons are being given. We aim to work in partnership with parents, consulting them on the content of RSE programmes.

Some parents would prefer to take the responsibility for their child's RSE. Section 405 of the Education Act 1996 enables parents to withdraw their children from all or part of the sex and relationship education except for those parts included in the statutory National Curriculum (i.e. in Science lessons). Alternative arrangements will be made for students who are withdrawn¹. Parents are encouraged to discuss their decisions with the Assistant Head Pastoral. The DfE also offer a standard pack of information for parents who withdraw their children from RSE to help with home schooling on this subject.

As explained previously, under the latest statutory guidance from the DfE, if a student has been previously withdrawn from any aspect of RSE, she will have the right to engage in this independently

– without the consent of parents or guardians three terms before her sixteenth birthday. The school will ensure this is available and appropriate.

Classroom materials used for RSE teaching will be shared with parents on request, including where an outside provider is used to deliver content. Parents may find it useful to view this material with a staff member so that explanations and context can be given alongside the material, but this is not a requirement of viewing the material. The school will always preview any material from outside providers before it is used in school.

10. Head teacher and Governors' role

Governing bodies and head teachers should consult parents in developing their RSE policy to ensure that they develop policies which have considered parental feedback and the culture of the community they serve.

This policy is ratified by the Governors and Parents were consulted on all aspects of the RSE curriculum. We will continue to consult with parents on any significant changes made to this curriculum.

Head teachers and governors should monitor the frequency of such cases of sexual activity or sexual health concerns in the school. If they are frequent this points to deficiencies in young people's awareness of, or confidence in, sources of confidential medical advice and this should be addressed in the RSE programme.

11. Health professionals

Health professionals are bound by their professional codes of conduct to maintain confidentiality. When working in a classroom situation, they are also bound by relevant school policies. They will seek to protect privacy and prevent inappropriate personal disclosures in a classroom setting, by negotiating ground rules and using distancing techniques. Outside the teaching situation, health professionals such as school nurses can:

- give one-to-one advice or information to a pupil on a health-related matter including contraception; and
- exercise their own professional judgement as to whether a young person has the maturity to consent to medical treatment including contraceptive treatment.

(The criteria for making such a decision are based on the 'Fraser guidelines' and can be found in guidance issued jointly by the Health Education Authority, the British Medical Association, Brook Advisory Centres and others. Any competent young person, regardless of age, can independently seek medical advice and give valid consent to treatment).

12. Child protection

Students have a right to expect Notre Dame School to provide a safe and secure environment. If a member of a school's staff (teaching or non-teaching) suspects that a child is a victim of abuse or they have reason to believe that he/she is at risk of abuse, they should follow the procedures and policies for reporting safeguarding concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

13. References

- DfE, Sex and relationship education guidance, 1 September 2026
- House of Commons, BRIEFING PAPER Number 06103, 19 December 2017 Pp. 4
- DfE Open Consultation Relationships (and Sex) and Health Education, July 2018
- Guidance under section 80A of the Education Act 2002

Reviews:

Drafted by Emma Carlstedt-Dyke

December 2025 reviewed by Emma Carlstedt-Duke

December 2023- Gemma Finney. To be reviewed in December 2027

ⁱ (House of Commons, BRIEFING PAPER Number 06103, 19 December 2017 Pp. 4)

Appendix A – RSE Topic List

Year 7 - Summer 2

Relationships

- Romantic Relationship
- Friendship
- Bullying
- Personal Safety

It Happens (External Speaker) - The Adolescent Body: Puberty

Year 8 - Autumn 2

Relationships

- Body Image
- Healthy & Unhealthy relationships
- Peer pressure

Summer 2

Relationships

- Gender Identity
- Diversity and Equality
- Relationship
- Consent
- First Aid

It Happens (External Speaker) - Early Digital Relationships

Year 9 - Summer 1

Relationships

- RSHE
- Sexting
- Consent
- Romance
- Different Types of Relationships
- Bodies

It Happens (External Speaker) - Intimate Relationships

Year 10 - Spring 1

Health and Wellbeing

- RSE
- Pregnancy & Contraception
- STIs
- LGBTQ+
- Cultural Understanding of different perspectives

It Happens (External Speaker) - Developing Digital Relationships (includes the dangers online and AI)

Year 11 - Spring 2

Relationships

- Abusive relationships and power
- Pornography and Revenge Porn
- Relationships and sex expectations
- Pleasure and Challenges
- Impact of media and pornography

It Happens (External Speaker) - Keeping Your Body Safe & Sexual Health