



# ST JOHN HENRY NEWMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

## HRSE POLICY

<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	C. Battle
<b>Position:</b>	Chair of Governors
<b>Signed:</b>	<i>C. Battle</i>
<b>Date:</b>	October 2024
<b>Review date:</b>	October 2027

## **Mission & Vision**

Our mission at St John Henry Newman Catholic School is to educate our pupils in the wholeness of mind, body and spirit through the teachings of Jesus Christ. We aim to work with parents, carers and the wider Catholic community to provide pupils with a comprehensive education that prepares them for life. Human Relationships and Sex Education is an important part of this.

We are mindful that the Catholic Church recognises that “Parents are the first educators of their children. It is their right and responsibility to inform and educate their children in matter relating to human growth and development”. As such, we aim to ensure our HRSE programme is organic, adapting in partnership with fruitful input and dialogue between parents, teachers and other stakeholders.

## **Vision for Human Relationships and Sex Education**

At St John Henry Newman 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.

## **Communication**

Prior to the commencement of each unit of work, a text message will be sent to all parents, containing the link to our detailed plan for each half term. We will welcome feedback and dialogue from parents based on the content of the newsletter and will adjust plans where necessary in light of constructive and relevant feedback received.

## **Senior Leadership Team Member Responsible for Oversight of HRSE and Department Lead:**

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## **Communication**

This policy has been made available on our website along with the roadmap of content covered in our curriculum (parents have been informed). Governors and the local parish Priests have received a copy of this policy. The policy will be published on our website and circulated to all members of the Governing Body and all members of staff.

The school prospectus will contain a statement about HRSE teaching and details of where to obtain a full copy of the policy. The prospectus will also cover the statutory elements of relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education that are not covered in HRSE, though the whole intent of the school curriculum is drawn from its Catholic character.

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.

Pupils have been and will continue to be consulted in relation to the policy through pupil voice. Pupil voice meetings and surveys of pupils and parents are regularly used to gain feedback and adapt the HRSE programme.

Prior to the commencement of each unit of work, an email will be sent to all parents, containing the link to our detailed plan for each half term. We will welcome feedback and dialogue from parents based on the content of the newsletter and will adjust plans where necessary in light of constructive and relevant feedback received.

### **Rationale**

As a Catholic 11 - 18 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. For example, 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 St John Henry Newman Catholic School 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 schools 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 recognises that to know and love God brings lasting happiness.

### **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-educationrelationships-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.

This table summarises statutory obligations:

Relationships Education	Relationships and Sex Health Education Education	
<p>All schools providing primary education, including all-through schools and middle schools</p> <p>(includes schools as set out in the Summary section).</p>	<p>All schools providing secondary education, including all-through schools and middle schools (see Summary section of statutory guidance).</p>	<p>All maintained schools including schools with a sixth form, academies, free schools, non-maintained special schools and</p> <p>alternative provision, including pupil referral units.</p>
<p>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.</p>		

### Requirements of the Diocese of Lancaster

The Bishop of Lancaster requires that all schools within the Diocese have a policy in line with Section 48 inspection requirements.

The key points within this guidance are as follows:

1. All schools must have an up-to-date HRSE policy that may incorporate Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education policy drawn up by the governing body, and available to parents and for inspection.
2. This should be developed in consultation with parents and the wider community.
3. Secondary schools should have clear parameters on what students should know when they leave school and be prepared for further education.

4. All schools' policies must include how they will teach Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education.

## **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 St John Henry Newman Catholic School we live out the Gospel values shared in the Beatitudes, throughout the life of school in our programme of The Way. In Form Time we explore our faith and the Gospel Values and participate in collective worship in a reflective, prayerful environment. Our assemblies follow The Way allowing for wider collective worship, and our Form Time masses in the chapel allow for regular, prayerful instruction from our Parish Priest. The school day ends in a celebration of our Faith as we say the Prayer of our namesake, Saint John Henry Newman.

Regular Castlerigg retreats help students to celebrate their faith and collaborate, socialise and meditate in a prayerful environment, socialising and working with others from different backgrounds.

We seek to contribute to charity through our student parliament, with a focus on fundraising for charities such as Mind and Cafod. Forms contribute to food banks and bake sales throughout the school year.

Within HRSE lessons and the wider curriculum, students are faced regularly with case studies and moral dilemmas which they work through, debate and discuss in a respectful classroom environment. Students are given the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their own behaviours and choices in these lessons, under the guidance and instruction of our RE teachers. We frequently root the HRSE lessons back to the Gospel

teachings, as HRSE is delivered by RE specialists who are best placed to facilitate these sessions, whilst spreading the Good News. As a consequence, students are able to closely match what they learn in HRSE and articulate how that translates into the teachings of Jesus Christ.

### **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,

HRSE should deepen the following areas of understanding.

- i) To develop self-respect and love of self.
- ii) To invite young people to develop and deepen a loving relationship with God.
- iii) To invite young people to understand that their life has a purpose.
- iv) 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.
- v) 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.
- vi) A strong awareness of their own safety and the nature of consent.
- vii) 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. The following example can be adapted for use in school.

- 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 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 seek to develop attitudes of responsibility towards ourselves and others, recognising the dignity in all.
- We will seek to enable students to understand the choices they make and how they can help or harm themselves and others.
- We will encourage students 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 students' knowledge of when to say 'no' to behaviours or attitudes that harm their dignity or the dignity of others and to be responsible for managing their own risk.
- We will develop students' experience of what it is to be truly happy so that they begin to understand the difference between happiness and gratification, satisfying the spirit rather than the senses.
- We will teach them the virtue of patience.
- We will teach students about the media and their choices, about what to watch, what games to play, what rules apply, especially when using social media, and that the dignity of all does not just apply to people who are physically seen, it applies to online relationships too.
- We will encourage students to develop their own moral framework about accessing information online.
- We will encourage students to recognise the influence of peer pressure and the moral integrity required to say "no".
- We will support students 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 teach students about legally protected characteristics and their duty to respect difference.
- We will teach students about the damage that drugs and alcohol can do to relationships with the self, as well as others.
- We will teach young people that God is merciful and always waiting for us to be reconciled with him.
- We will teach students how to make healthy choices in relation to diet and exercise.
- We will teach students how to stay mentally healthy.

- We will teach students how to maintain a safe digital footprint.
- We will teach students how to make appropriate choices online and avoid elements of the dark web.
- We will teach students the law around online learning and the dangers linked to being online, including how they can safeguard themselves and others when online.

## **Inclusion**

At St John Henry Newman Catholic School 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.

As a fully inclusive school, we can support students in many wide-ranging ways. This would always start with discussion. Should students or parents feel the need to discuss any matters of inclusion with us, we welcome conversation and open communication in the first instance so that we can consider and focus our support and resources in a mindful, appropriate way. Conversations can begin with a Head of Year, our Student Support Officers, the SENDCo, or even a member of the Senior Leadership Team. As a small school, we pride ourselves on our ability to make personable connections and maintain a child centred approach.

## **Equality**

The governing body has wide obligations under the Equalities Act 2010 and will work to ensure that St John Henry Newman Catholic School 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. Our robust Equality Policy and Equality Statement can be found in the policy section of our website.

### **The Equality Act 2010**

St John Henry Newman Catholic School is an Equal Opportunities school. We comply fully with the Equality Act 2010.

Through the process of delivery of our HRSE curriculum, the Senior Leadership Team, Pastoral Team and teaching staff will endeavour to take proportionate, positive action where disadvantages affecting particular marginalised groups are identified.

As part of our reviewing process, we will use pupil and parent voice in order to help us consider the make-up and needs of our pupil body including, but not limited to, the gender and age of our pupils.

St John Henry Newman Catholic School does not tolerate instances of sexism, misogyny, homophobia or gender stereotyping, and as such our HRSE policy is designed to educate students around these issues, and organically adapt to more bespoke teaching where the need may arise. Furthermore, our Behaviour Policy sets out how we specifically deal with instances of prejudice or discrimination.

## **Pupils with SEND**

**The school's SENDCo is Mrs Keelan [senco@newman.cumbria.sch.uk](mailto:senco@newman.cumbria.sch.uk)**

For pupils who have Additional or Special Educational Needs/Disabilities, content will be differentiated appropriately to ensure equality of opportunity for pupils. In the first instance, the class teacher is best placed to implement differentiation and access. Furthermore prior to the commencement and delivery of some aspects of the HRSE curriculum, discussion with the SENDCo is necessary in order to ascertain what is best for the pupil, that content is accessible, and that it is age appropriate for pupils with SEND.

Where the 'Preparing for Adulthood' outcomes apply from the SEND Code of Practice, the SENDCo will lead on coordinating pupils with EHCPs and ensuring the RE team are made aware of the requirements that need to be addressed and met in order to ensure pupils have the very best quality of experience and that our processes follow the Equality Act of 2010.

The critical characteristic of Catholic education is that all people are children of God. With this belief, underpinning school life perceived limits on students because of their characteristics must always be subject to challenge as the school is part of the Universal Catholic Church. It is through this lens schools should challenge stereotypes and address behaviours such as homophobia, misogyny and sexism. Schools must be alive to the fact that the approach of the Church may not be the same as the approach taken in other areas of life, such as social media. A clear and consistent message about human dignity must be conveyed through the whole of school life by staff, students and those who support the work of the school such as governors.

Governors at St John Henry Newman Catholic School understand the implications of the DfE's 2017 guidance [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#) for their school. The guidance covers what sexual violence and harassment is, schools' and colleges' legal responsibilities, a whole school or college 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. At our school, students learn in ICT and HRSE lessons about managing personal privacy in an online context and why online relationships should recognise the human person behind the screen persona. Our staff are trained yearly and kept up to date through the Keeping Children Safe in Education

model. We also offer prevent and deter training regularly. Key members of the Pastoral Team are Safeguarding Level Three trained and Heads of Year have training up to Safeguarding Level 2. The governing body recognizes that many issues covered can be challenging for staff, and so training is reviewed and considered regularly to ensure it is fit for purpose.

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 should challenge the cultural assumptions that can underpin prejudices, such as racism, sexism and religious discrimination. Catholic schools should robustly challenge homophobia or any inequitable behaviours based on a person's sexual orientation or gender as an infringement of human dignity. Though schools will teach the Church's view on what it means to be human, and the challenges this offers to a wide range of lifestyles, the needs of the individual students will remain paramount. In a Catholic school, we aim to see the child, a Child of God, as a person in need of love and care. 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 St John Henry Newman Catholic School we address questions about sexuality and gender as and when they arise. Our school's behaviour policy identifies all protected characteristics as possible triggers for aggressive or bullying behaviours. We train all staff to support students 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 student 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. As a school, we work to challenge all limiting stereotypes around sexuality and gender identities and work to enable each young person to full their God given potential.

### **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.

## **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. They were emailed the content of the HRSE curriculum and sent a text confirming that the email had been sent.

The school will involve and support parents in learning about HRSE by sharing the programme of study; offering a half termly newsletter about the content of HRSE lessons; letters when visitors are coming to school; letters when a sensitive

subject is to be taught; directing parents to resources to use at home; providing information on the school website and listening to questions. Information about HRSE is contained in the school prospectus and the majority of the programme of study is developed through the ethos of the school. However, at times, areas of particular sensitivity, such as puberty, will benefit from additional parental support so' at such times, letters will be sent home and parents may be invited into school to discuss the content of HRSE lessons.

### **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, it would be good practice for the headteacher to discuss the application with parents and ensure that they understand the nature and purpose of the curriculum in a Catholic context. A discussion should 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 want to record and document this process. The Headteacher or Assistant Headteacher will be involved in this discussion along with parents and the child. The information will be documented in SIMs under the student's intervention strategy.

A good practice is also likely to include the headteacher discussing with parents the benefits of receiving this education and any detrimental effects that withdrawal might have on the child. For example, the possible social or emotional impact of withdrawal, the likelihood of them hearing a peer's version of the content, rather than the teacher's. However, parents may prefer to discuss sex education to their child at home instead.

Following discussions, except in exceptional circumstances, the school will respect the parents' request to withdraw the child, up to and until three terms before the child turns 16. After that point, if the child wishes to receive sex education rather than be withdrawn, the school should make arrangements to provide the child with sex education during one of those terms. This process is applicable for pupils with SEND. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the headteacher may want to take a pupil's specific needs arising from their SEND into account when making this decision. A process for the parental right to withdraw will form part of the policy. Please see Appendix A for the procedure to exercise your right to withdraw.

### **Teaching HRSE**

Monitoring, evaluation and scrutiny of HRSE will take place regularly through book scrutiny, lesson observations, SOW robustness testing and student/parent voice.

## **HRSE Delivery and Curriculum**

HRSE will primarily be delivered to Years 7 to 11 through weekly, half-hour sessions with our RE department. Our RE team is best placed to deliver meaningful HRSE by keeping our Gospel Values at the heart of pupils' exploration of human nature and the many complex issues we face in our daily lives.

The Learning Journey for pupils through Year 7 - 11 can be found on our website. The curriculum has been designed as a spiral journey, to allow pupils to revisit key ideas and concepts so that there is greater chance of interleaving ideas, and building upon content in an age appropriate way.

Through a detailed HRSE audit, we have identified where HRSE is delivered and explored in subject areas outside of RE such as Science, English, PE, Technology and Health and Social Care.

Basic first aid, Health Education and Online Safety are covered during technology, science, ICT and PE lessons. Furthermore, our drop down SALAD days allow for the HRSE curriculum to be further developed here and for the school to meet its statutory obligations in this area.

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 St John Henry Newman Catholic School and agree to follow its instruction.

## **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 co-ordinator must be given access to training 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.<sup>1</sup>

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. The safeguarding framework of the school should frame this, 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 following the school's safeguarding policy and confidentiality procedures. The safe guarding policy can be found in the policies section of the school website.

The school will ensure that this policy is available for all staff, governors, parents and students and the confidential nature of how to obtain advice and guidance as a result of any issues or questions that may arise.

Students will be encouraged to talk to their parents or carers about issues and questions that arise as part of the programme. It will be made clear to all that unconditional confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where illegal or abusive concerns come to light, and these will be dealt with under the terms of the relevant policies – the school’s Safeguarding Policy and Staff Code of Conduct make clear the duty upon staff to comply with disclosure concerns. Both policies are available on the school’s website.

## **Appendix A**

### Right to Withdraw

Having had an extensive conversation with the headteacher or assistant headteacher (who has consulted with the headteacher) should you still wish to withdraw your child from the sex element of HRSE, you should submit your request explicitly stating your reasoning in a dated letter addressed to the headteacher prior to the term commencing when you would like your child withdrawn.

To make clear, the school is only required by law to withdraw your child from sex education, we will not withdraw students from health or relationships education unless in extreme circumstances where the curriculum content is likely to prove a traumatic or distressing experience for the child due to individual circumstances they may be experiencing presently or may have experienced in the past.

The alternative curriculum provision will be to send students to another class of their year group and give them access to bespoke Careers, Health and Relationship resources under the supervision of another adult within the school.