



ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL, NEWRY

Relationship and Sexuality Policy

Revised January 2026

This policy has been revised to reflect:

- DENI Circular 2015/22 (*Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance*)
- DENI Circular 2024/01 (*Guidance on Amendments to the Relationships and Sexuality Education Curriculum Content*)
- *Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance Document for Post Primary Schools: Northern Ireland (NI) 2021*
- CCEA, (2019) *Relationships and Sexuality Education Guidance 'An Update for Post-Primary Schools'*

Definition

As a Rights Respecting School, St. Mary's is committed to nurturing the personal growth and development of its students within a child centred, inclusive and secure learning environment where every student is cherished and valued. Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process which encompasses the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding as well as the development of attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This policy is intended to provide a framework through which our students can develop the necessary life skills, attitudes and values to deal with the challenges they may meet and to make informed decisions based on self-respect and self-esteem. The RSE programme acknowledges the important foundation established by parents/carers as primary educators of every young person prior to formal education.

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person which relate to being male or female and is subject to change and development throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions. It especially concerns affectivity, the capacity to give and receive love; procreation and, in a more general way, the aptitude for forming relationships with others. It is a complex dimension of human life and relationships.

Relationships and Sexuality Education provides an understanding that positive, caring environments are essential for the development of a healthy self-image and that every young person is in control of and responsible for their own bodies. RSE provides knowledge about the processes of reproduction and the nature of sexuality and relationships. It encourages the acquisition of skills and attitudes which allow pupils to manage their relationships in a responsible and healthy manner.

'A commitment exists, through being a healthy school, to support healthy children, who are better able to learn and develop'

(Every School a Good School - 2009)

'The school has a caring ethos and shows a strong commitment to the welfare of the pupils and the staff'

(Together Towards Improvement- 2003)

'The delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education contributes to 'promoting pupils' personal growth and development and in supporting their academic achievement – that is, developing each child as a whole'

(ETI, 2011, page 22)

‘Ensure that learners, at each stage of their development, have an understanding of and respect for the rights, equality and diversity of all without discrimination’

(Community Relations, Equality and Diversity Policy 2011)

Pupils have the right to learn in a safe environment, to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated less favourably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

(The Equality Act -Sexual Orientation Regulations (NI) 2006)

Rationale

The RSE programme in St. Mary’s provides opportunities for students to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding of human relationships, growth, development and sexuality through learning opportunities which enable them to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Students are encouraged to explore the various relationships in their lives and to learn how to develop and value such relationships based on responsibility, trust, care and mutual respect. Such skills and knowledge enable them to build better and safer foundations for developing personal relationships in later life.

Students learn that every person is a unique human being. They learn about their spiritual, social, emotional and physical growth and about the various changes that occur as they progress towards adolescence and adulthood. The RSE programme provides students with the information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today. Students are encouraged to make responsible choices about themselves, the way they live their lives and about others. Teenagers today are exposed to a wealth of information through news, music, television, videos, the internet and social media. The RSE programme aims to give students the best information available, offered in a caring, dignified, respectful and safe environment. The RSE programme helps students to recognise potentially exploitative, manipulative and dangerous situations and to equip them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to take preventative action.

The School Vision expresses:

“Our vision is to educate, empower and support the students in our school to reach their full potential by focusing on their holistic development and as a Rights Respecting School, embrace the opportunities of living according to the catholic faith and celebrating diversity.”

As a Rights Respecting School, the RSE programme and the principles that underpin it act in accordance with the UNCRC and with articles:

Article 12 - ‘provide all children with the right to express their views.’

Article 13 - ‘right to freedom of expression.’

Article 17 - ‘right to access of information.’

Article 34 – ‘right to be protected from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.’

Aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education

The aims of Relationships and Sexuality Education are to:

- promote a Catholic vision of sexuality that reflects every person's uniqueness, worth, innate dignity and right to be respected, where young people facing challenges are accompanied and supported;
- teach, nurture, advise, guide and enable our students within a moral, social and spiritual framework;
- promote students' personal growth and development and in supporting them to achieve their full academic and creative potential;
- enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of students, enabling them to make positive, informed decisions;
- promote positive attitudes around self and mutual respect with an understanding and appreciation of diversity and inclusion regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or creed;
- support students to develop healthy and respectful friendships and relationships;
- foster an understanding of and have a healthy attitude towards sexuality and relationships;
- help students to keep themselves safe from exploitation, manipulation, abuse or violence of any kind;
- raise awareness of and be able to identify health and wellbeing issues such as anxiety, depression, disordered eating, self-harm and compulsive behaviour;
- promote responsible, respectful behaviour as well as recognise and challenge inappropriate behaviour;
- help students to value healthy relationships, family life, marriage and parenthood;
- encourage students to make responsible decisions about their relationships and sexual health;
- promote an appreciation of the dignity and value of human life, which is underpinned in the Catholic teaching of the sanctity of life.

Objectives of Relationships and Sexuality Education

In line with the school's vision and ethos, CCEA and CCMS guidelines, the RSE programme enables students to:

- acquire knowledge and understanding of self and develop a positive sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-worth;
- develop an appreciation of the dignity, uniqueness and well-being of self and others;
- acquire and use an appropriate vocabulary and respectful language to discuss feelings, sexuality, growth and development;
- receive age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion;
- access reliable, accurate and age-appropriate information about human physiology with particular reference to sex, human fertility, reproduction, sexually transmitted infections and diseases and other sexual health matters;
- develop coping strategies to manage mental health issues better;
- understand the nature, growth and development of relationships within families, in friendships and in society;
- develop awareness of and value the diversity of family life, different family structures and the responsibilities of parenthood;

- know the features of positive and stable relationships (trust, respect, honesty and equality) and those of unhealthy relationships (imbalance of power, coercion, control, exploitation, manipulation and abuse of any kind);
- manage better with the breakdown of a relationship and the effect of change, including loss, separation, divorce, loneliness and bereavement;
- develop skills in decision making, problem solving, and implement such skills in various personal, social and health contexts;
- become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change and understand that their developing sexuality is an important aspect of self-identity;
- develop personal skills which will help to establish and sustain healthy, respectful relationships; personal skills which will instill an awareness of safety and help to develop their own morals and values system;
- develop coping strategies to protect themselves and others from all forms of abuse and violence;
- develop communication skills of active listening, negotiation, and the ability to offer and receive constructive feedback;
- explore the moral and ethical issues surrounding sexuality;
- develop a critical understanding of external influences on lifestyles and decision making;
- understand the stages of sexual growth and development
- identify and explore aspects of sexuality including gender roles and issues, stereotyping, and cultural influences;
- develop skills to manage peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety including online, drugs, alcohol and risky sexual behaviour;
- understand consent and explain its implications in relation to personal boundaries and know how to actively communicate and recognise consent from others offline and online
- know and understand the law in relation to consent;
- access support for self and/or others at risk;
- be aware that media portrayal of relationships may not reflect real life and understand the impact of this on the expectations of relationships which can degrade human sexuality and relationships;
- value the strong, working partnerships between school, home and the wider community to promote student well-being;
- co-operate with all staff when dealing with sensitive issues surrounding sex, sexual identity, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, including any form of homophobic bullying type behaviours/language.

Morals and Values

As a Rights Respecting School, the RSE programme in St. Mary's will enable pupils to:

- respect themselves and others;
- know the difference between right and wrong;
- take responsibility for their own actions;
- value abstinence until physical and emotional maturity;
- understand the long and short-term consequences of their decisions and actions for themselves and others;
- appreciate the value of stable family life, marriage, permanent loving relationships and the responsibilities of parenthood;

- understand Catholic Church teaching on the sacredness of human life morality and personal relationships.

Catholic Education

As a Catholic School, we share our vision of the human person in relationship with others by living out the Catholic values of love, inclusion, respect and care. The specific purpose of RSE in a Catholic School is to teach, nurture, advise, guide and enable young people in the school's care to recognise their own sacredness and the sacredness of others within the context of Catholic faith and teaching. St. Mary's is a school where everyone is valued and their innate dignity is respected. Every student with relationship and sexuality issues will be cared for and supported.

'The Second Vatican Council spoke of the need for a positive and prudent sex education ... It can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love, for mutual self-giving'.

(Amoris Laetitia Of The Holy Father Francis, 2016, pg. 280)

'The Catholic school dedicates itself to the education of the whole human person, leading to a mature integration of the moral, physical, spiritual, religious and emotional dimensions of the individual'.

(Pope Saint John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, 1981, pg. 37)

"The world exists for everyone, because all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of colour, religion, talent... cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all. As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.

(Pope Francis, Fratelli Tutti, 2020, para. 118)

Vulnerable Groups

Some students are more vulnerable to all forms of abuse and exploitation e.g., Children Looked After. The RSE programme ensures that all students develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to enable them to:

- identify inappropriate and exploitative, coercive behaviour;
- know and use staying safe strategies;
- recognise and build healthy relationships;
- seek help from a Trusted Adult/support organisation.

The RSE programme is sensitive to the needs of every student in relation to ability, emotional literacy, maturity and personal circumstances. For example, their own sexual orientation, faith or culture. The RSE programme is delivered in a discreet and inclusive manner, without prejudice or discrimination.

Supporting Students at Risk

St. Mary's High School follows the Child Protection procedures as laid out in the Department of Education Circular 2017/04 Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools. The student's right to privacy should always be respected by every person in the school. Staff will not give a guarantee of confidentiality to any students regarding Child Protection and Safeguarding issues.

- The child's right to privacy must always be respected by every person in the school
- Children will not be expected to answer any personal questions.
- Staff will not promise confidentiality.
- The Vice Principal/Designated Teacher must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest a child is at risk from harm or abuse.

Skills

The RSE programme in St. Mary's will enable pupils to develop the necessary skills to form and maintain positive relationships and to make informed choices and decisions regarding their health and well-being. Pupils will also be supported to develop skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values they are exposed to. Pupils develop the following skills:

- + Practical Skills – for everyday living, supporting others, future parenting, for accessing health and advisory services;
- + Communication Skills – active listening, empathy, sharing personal views competently, confidently and appropriately, giving and receiving constructive feedback, managing and resolving conflict respectfully;
- + Decision making and problem solving – the steps in making personal decisions and sensible choices in the light of relevant information, making informed judgements and decisions about what to do in real life situations and actively positively on such judgments and decisions. Pupils are encouraged to be independent in thought and action, to form and consolidate their personal morals and values;
- + Interpersonal and Leadership skills – for managing relationships competently and effectively; skills that reflect teamwork and leadership and demonstrate the ability to be creative and work effectively with others;
- + Self-Reflection – the ability to consider previous actions, evaluate them to inform future judgements and decisions.

RSE Topics

- Consent
- Contraception
- Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse
- Healthy, Positive Sexual Expression and Relationships
- Internet Safety
- LGBTQI+ Matters
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: including sexually transmitted diseases teenage pregnancy and abortion
- Social media and its effects on Relationships and Self-Esteem
- Teen Parenting

- Menstrual Wellbeing
- Online and Internet Safety
- Self-Awareness
- Health and Well Being (physical and mental)
- Managing Risk
- Active Citizenship
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Smoking/Vaping
- Healthy Relationships
- Addiction
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Community Lifesavers
- Period Dignity
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Organisation and Structure – Delivery of RSE

Key Stage 3

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an integral component of the Personal Development programme, delivered by Form Teachers during one weekly time-tabled Personal Development lesson. The Personal Development Programme gives students the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge and understanding of the various types of relationships, growth, development sexuality and identity which enables them to form values and establish behaviour within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Students are encouraged to explore the various friendships in their lives and to learn how to develop and enjoy friendships that are based on responsibility and mutual respect. Such knowledge and skills enable students to build the foundations for developing more personal relationships later in life.

The key concepts involved in the delivery of RSE include:

1. Self Awareness
2. Personal Health
3. Relationships

RSE is a statutory part of Learning for Life and Work in the Personal Development and Home Economics strands:

Personal Development:

1.Key Concept – Self-Awareness

- Explore and express a sense of self
- Explore personal morals, values and beliefs
- Investigate the influences on a young person
- Explore the different ways to develop self-esteem

2.Key Concept – Personal Health

- Explore the concept of Health as the development of a whole person,
- Investigate the influences on physical and emotional/mental personal health of,
- Develop understanding about, and strategies to manage, the effects of change on body, mind and behaviour,
- Develop strategies to promote personal safety.

3.Key Concept – Relationships

- Explore the qualities of relationships including friendship
- Explore the qualities of a loving, respectful relationship
- Develop coping strategies to deal with challenging relationship scenarios
- Develop strategies to avoid and resolve conflict,
- Explore the implications of sexual maturation
- Explore the emotional, social and moral implications of early sexual activity
- Receive age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion.

Home Economics:

Key Concept – Home and Family Life

- Explore the roles and responsibilities of individuals within a variety of home and family structures
- Develop awareness of parenting skills
- Investigate some of the changing needs of family members at different stages of the life cycle
- Explore strategies to manage family scenarios

Key Stage 4

RSE is a central theme of GCSE Learning for Life and Work through the Key Concept of Personal Development. RSE is also included in the Key Stage 4 Personal Development Programme.

The statutory requirements relevant to RSE at this Key Stage are that students should be enabled to:

- develop an understanding of how to maximise and sustain their own health and wellbeing;
- reflect on, and respond to, their developing concept of self, including managing emotions and reactions to ongoing life experiences;
- recognise, assess and manage risk in a range of real-life contexts;
- develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships;
- develop an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parenting; and
- receive age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion.

Post 16

The Post 16 Enrichment programme allows student to explore further in an age-appropriate way human relationships and development. Teachers should lead discussions based on students' questions, interests and experiences. This helps students to build on their learning and provides And provide opportunities for discussion in a safe space.

The programme is supported by a range of external agencies including PSNI, PIPS Care and Support, Start 360, Love for Life and Women's Aid.

Cross-curricular

Many subjects contribute to the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education. RSE shares content with the Programme of Study of a range of subjects and this is mapped across curriculum areas and year groups. This extensive RSE baseline allows the transfer and reinforcement of learning to occur in a range of learning contexts.

External Agencies

The expertise and skills of educational and health professionals supports the RSE programme. All agencies are asked to adhere to the ethos and values of the school and its RSE Policy.

As a Catholic School, all teachers involved in RSE within their subject area are very aware of Catholic Church teaching on morality and personal relationships and thus approach will be in accordance with this teaching. All RSE lessons will be delivered in a manner which reflects and embodies the Catholic ethos of our school and recognises the uniqueness and importance of every student in our care.

Many aspects of the RSE programme are also explored or reinforced by the school culture and daily interactions within the classroom and the wider school.

Equality of Provision

The RSE programme in St. Mary's is relevant and accessible to all students in the school regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, perceived or actual sexual orientation, disability and religion. The school ensures students with SEN and Newcomer students have appropriate, accessible and relevant Relationships and Sexuality Education within an adaptive learning environment.

Responsibilities within RSE Policy

Parents/Carers:

The school will never assume the role of parental/carer responsibility. We view parents/carers as the primary educators and decision makers regarding their child's physical and emotional health and wellbeing.

Board of Governors:

The Boards of Governors should;

- ensure the school has a Relationships and Sexuality Education policy and curriculum linked to their pastoral care/child protection policy;
- examine and approve the completed policy and programme prior to their implementation in the school and review the policy at regular intervals;
- be sensitive to the religious and cultural beliefs of both teachers and parents while fulfilling their responsibility to ensure the availability of adequate RSE for all young people.

Pastoral Leader/Designated Teacher for Child Protection: - Vice Principal:

- Ensure the RSE programme supports the Pastoral Care Programme and Child Protection procedures;

Leader of Learning (Pastoral):

The Leader of Learning (Pastoral), Mrs. J. Hughes, will:

- be responsible for whole school Personal Development and Support Programmes;
- lead the strategic development of RSE across all key stages including the revision of the RSE Policy at regular intervals;
- facilitate the training of relevant staff to aid the effective delivery of the RSE;
- map the delivery of RSE across curriculum areas;
- monitor, evaluate and review the RSE programme;
- report to the Principal and SLT in relation to all aspects of RSE;
- plan and monitor the delivery of RSE themes within the Personal Development Programme;
- support all teachers in the delivery of the RSE themes.

Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator:

The Health and Wellbeing Coordinator – Mrs C. Malone-Ryan is responsible for:

- ensuring that the Relationships and Sexuality Policy within the school is consistent with the development of Health Promotion and Education;
- making recommendations and changes necessary to resources and opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles.

The Health and Wellbeing Co-Ordinator will regularly:

- review the RSE Policy to ensure it promotes health lifestyles;
- co-ordinate, monitor and review Health Education activities;
- collaborate with a broad range of potential community-based health agencies to develop resources and extra-curricular activities in line with the RSE policy.

Year Tutors:

- Monitor the delivery of RSE themes within Personal Development lessons through Form Teacher meetings;
- Support Form Teachers in the delivery of the RSE themes within Personal Development lessons;
- Give feedback to the Pastoral Support Senior Teacher regarding the inclusion of RSE within the overall Personal Development programme;
- Deal appropriately with any concerns raised by Form Teachers regarding the personal development of students e.g. poor mental health and well-being, negative attitudes, concerning behaviour;
- Use the referral system for Child Protection and Behaviour Management, including referrals to the school's counsellor.

Form Teachers:

- Are responsible for ensuring the effective delivery of RSE themes within Personal Development lessons;
- Ensure all students in their form class have equitable access to the programme;
- Create a child centered, respectful and inclusive learning environment where students feel safe to discuss their feelings and emotions;

- Report any concerns regarding the personal development of individual students to the Year Tutor and when necessary the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and the Behaviour Management Co-Ordinator.

Heads of Department:

- Facilitate whole school mapping of RSE themes within their curriculum area;
- Support departmental members in the delivery of RSE themes including the provision of adequate resources;
- Promote RSE themes within departmental teaching.

Learning Support Co-Ordinator and Inclusion and Diversity Co-Ordinator:

- Liaise with all teachers to ensure equitable access to the RSE programme for students with additional needs and newcomer status.

Confidentiality

Relationships and Sexuality Education is delivered in a safe, trusting, respectful environment where students feel reassured that their well-being is paramount. The right to privacy must always be respected; no person should be expected to ask or answer personal questions. Realistic scenarios, case studies, role play, drama, videos and stories will be used to enable students to discuss issues without personal disclosure. Students are also encouraged to discuss any concerns with their parents or carers.

Staff should not promise confidentiality. Parents/carers and students should be informed that confidentiality cannot be maintained. The school provides information on external sources of support and how they can be accessed. Teachers play a significant role in identifying potentially ‘at risk’ students and are vigilant to those experiencing distress and/or changes in their behaviour.

The Vice Principal/Designated Teacher or Principal must be informed of any disclosures which might suggest that a student is at risk or that abuse is suspected. Decisions can then be taken in accordance with the school’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Teachers can provide general educational advice to students as part of the curriculum. It is important that the type of advice and the way it is given is supportive of the role of parents/carers and reflects the ethos of the school. Teachers recognise it is the role of Health Professionals to offer medical advice to students.

Right of Withdrawal of Students from RSE

Parents will be consulted on the implementation of our RSE policy and are encouraged to share in the responsibility of this element of their child’s education. Parents/Carers may wish to independently educate their child on certain aspects of RSE and have the right to withdraw their child from sex and relationship education lessons that are beyond those included in the statutory national curriculum.

Parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns and are welcome to review any RSE resources the school uses. If a parent/carer chooses to withdraw their daughter from all or part of the RSE programme, they will be asked to consider the social and emotional effects of withdrawal, as well as the possibility that their daughter may hear their peers’ version of the information presented or what

was said in the classroom, rather than safer and more reliable sources of information from the teacher/external organisation.

If deemed necessary by parental/carer request, alternative arrangements can be made to withdraw students from RSE lessons and work from other areas of the curriculum will be provided. To facilitate this, parents/carers are advised to inform Mrs J Hughes, by phone at the start of the academic year.

Approaches to Learning and Teaching

Respectful, positive relationships underpin the teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education. Learning takes place in a safe, secure, respectful and inclusive environment where students are encouraged to express their feelings and opinions and participate confidently and freely without embarrassment or judgement. The adherence to the Rights Respecting School Charter (RESPECT) helps students to feel safer more comfortable to explore and discuss sensitive issues.

Preventative Curriculum - 'Keeping Safe Messages'

The Personal Development Programme, together with the wider RSE curriculum links, offers a safe and supportive environment for students to explore sensitive issues in an age-appropriate way to help them manage risk better and to stay safe. This is achieved by raising awareness of social, emotional and health issues, developing students' confidence, resilience and coping skills. The school offers early intervention support and provides reasonable adjustments when students are experiencing difficulties.

Appendix 1 – Keeping Safe Messages

Responding to Sensitive Issues

On occasions, certain sensitive issues may require consideration. Such issues need to be presented in a non-judgemental way, free from sensationalism and bias. The messages received by the students should be compatible with the Catholic ethos of the school.

Teachers are particularly sensitive to the personal circumstances and cultural backgrounds of their students when dealing with sensitive issues e.g., same-sex parents/carers, blended families. Students' views and values are influenced by their informal learning experiences and by the views of family peers, community and the media.

There may be sensitive issues which different individuals hold strong opinions on, based on their values and beliefs. Students have opportunities to explore such issues in an age-appropriate way, enabling them to deal with the diverse and complex range of challenges facing them today. In dealing with such issues, teachers will follow the Personal Development curriculum framework to help students develop an understanding of their feelings, thinking and behaviour and to develop strategies to manage these feelings. It may be more appropriate to deal with certain issues or questions on an individual basis or to arrange time for group discussions outside class time. Through Teacher Professional Learning, teachers are supported to deal with sensitive issues within the Personal Development Programme.

- Age of Consent

The age of consent in N Ireland is 16 years of age

- Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008

- **Contraceptive Advice to pupils**

Within the programme of study for Personal Development and Science, students receive information in relation to contraception and healthy sexual relationships. If requested, teachers advise students to seek advice from parents or medical practitioners.

- **HIV/AIDS and STI's**

Students should be provided with information about the most common STI's, the difference between HIV and AIDS, modes of transmission, practical hygiene and risky behaviours. They need to know that only those who are sexually active are potentially at risk from getting HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.

- **Teenage Pregnancy**

In the event of a student informing a teacher that she is or may be pregnant, the teacher must refer the pupil to the Designated Teacher who will follow Child Protection guidelines. Any School Age Mothers will be referred to and supported by SAM (School Age Mums) and an education plan of support will be agreed between the school, agency and home. Students will be encouraged to continue to attend school, before and after the birth of their baby.

- **Abuse**

Members of staff may play a significant part in the early detection of abuse. Correct procedures as outlined in DENI's Circular (Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools – 2017/04) should be followed as outlined in the school's Child Protection Policy:

- the member of staff should immediately inform the Designated Teacher
- the Designated Teacher must inform / consult with Social Services and / or the PSNI
- no teacher should take on the role of investigator. This is the responsibility of Social Services and the PSNI
- teachers should give the student time to talk without probing, record exactly what the pupil says and not promise to keep secrets.

Confidentiality cannot be promised to any student when abuse is suspected. The pupils will also be reassured that she will be supported.

- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

The school is aware that young people growing up can experience sexual identity and orientation confusion. In keeping with Catholic Church teaching, it is important that abstinence is promoted for all students regardless of their sexual orientation. All students have the right to learn in a safe environment; to be treated with respect and dignity and not be treated any less favorably on grounds of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Relationships and Sexuality Education will help to promote positive views regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, which, in turn, will help to promote healthier self-esteem of young people who may feel different. The school will respond to all issues of sexual orientation and gender identity in a sensitive and reassuring way. As a Rights Respecting School, all negative and prejudice attitudes and behaviours will be challenged to create an inclusive, respectful learning environment.

Bullying type behaviour, on the grounds of sexual orientation, is unacceptable. All issues relating to homophobic language and bullying type behaviour will be dealt with appropriately in accordance

with the School's Anti-Bullying Policy. Use of unkind, disrespectful and harmful language will be challenged and deemed unacceptable.

- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences when the mutilation is carried out and in later life.

FGM is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland. If any member of staff has a concern that a student may be at immediate risk of FGM, they should report this immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and an immediate referral will be made to the HSCT Gateway Team.

- **Forced Marriage**

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland. If a member of staff has knowledge or is suspicious of a forced marriage in relation to a student, they must report this immediately to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and an immediate referral will be made to the HSCT Gateway Team.

- **Domestic Violence**

Through the delivery of Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme, students can explore the sensitive issue of domestic violence in an age-appropriate way. Domestic violence can affect not only the young person's sense of security and wellbeing, but also how they learn at school. Students are taught about personal safety and developing safe and respectful relationships. Any concerns regarding student safety is covered by the procedures outlined within the Child Protection Policy. The school will provide parents/carers with information by signposting them towards specialist agencies that can provide support and emergency care. The school also provides parents/carers with support information through the school website and app.

Appendix 2 – RSE Terminology

Use of External/Support Agencies

We acknowledge the importance of ensuring that any external agencies used to support the delivery of Personal Development and RSE must adhere to the values and ethos particular to our school. All external and support agencies will receive a copy of the RSE policy before commencement of their work in the school. Current external/support agencies include:

- Love For Life
- School Nursing Service
- School Counsellor (Family Works)
- School Age Mums (SAM)
- The Prince's Trust
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
- Women's Aid
- Religious Retreat Team (LOGOS Ministries)
- Relate NI
- PSNI
- START 360

- Cara Friend
- NSPCC

Appendix 3 – RSE Support Organisations

Related School Policies

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and as such should be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Drugs Education Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Internet Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Staff ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- Preventative Curriculum Policy
- Code of Conduct for Staff
- Mobile Phone Policy
- CRED Policy
- Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Parental Engagement Policy
- Learning Support Policy
- Visitors Policy

Dissemination of the Policy

Key Pastoral policies are available from the School Website www.stmarys.newry.ni.sch.uk and the School App.

Consultation

During the review of this document, consultation took place with the following groups:

- **Students** – Online questionnaire
- **Parents/Carers** – Online questionnaire
- **Staff** – Department audit
- **Board of Governors**

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Mr. M Fitzpatrick, Vice Principal/Pastoral Leader/Designated Teacher and Mrs. J Hughes, Leader of Learning (Pastoral) are responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the RSE policy:

Signed by Chair of Governors: _____

Date: _____

Signed by Principal: _____

Date: _____

Date of Review: January 2029

Appendix 1- Keeping Safe Messages

Keeping Safe Messages 2024-2025								
TERM	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Post 16	Parents/Carers	
1	<p>Health and Whole Person Health and Wellbeing – physical and mental Healthy Relationships</p> <p>Managing Risk CFR and Community Lifesavers</p> <p>Anti-Bullying Positive healthy relationships</p> <p>Online Safety Strategies for a positive digital footprint and improved online safety</p> <p>Science Lab safety</p> <p>Technology and Design Safety in School Workshop Basic First Aid</p> <p>Home Economics Kitchen safety, Home safety, Safe handling of Knives</p> <p>RE Choices and Morality</p> <p>English Halloween Safety</p>	<p>Road Safety Dangers for Pedestrians</p> <p>Healthy Bodies Drugs Smoking Alcohol (Effects on human body)</p> <p>Bullying Strategies to deal with bullying</p> <p>Online Safety Dangers and consequences of sharing information</p> <p>Science Electrical safety in Home and Outside</p> <p>Technology and Design Safety in School Workshop Basic First Aid</p> <p>RE Nature of Sin and Role of Conscience in Moral Decision Making</p>	<p>Health and whole person Concept of healthy person</p> <p>Self-Concept Coping under pressure</p> <p>Drugs Awareness Drug addiction Consequences</p> <p>Managing Change Dealing with feelings</p> <p>Managing Risk Online Safety</p> <p>Technology and Design Safety in School Workshop Basic First Aid</p> <p>Home Economics Health protection and disease prevention.</p>	<p>Managing Risk My online reputation CPR Consent</p> <p>Health Education Lifestyle choices Obesity Smoking Mental health</p> <p>Road Safety Using mobile and speeding</p> <p>Healthy Relationships Qualities in friendship Consent Sexual behaviour Peer pressure Teenage pregnancy STI's</p> <p>English Persuasive Essay/Speech – Social Networking Sites</p> <p>Home Economics Nutrition and healthy eating</p> <p>English Body Image Technology Social media</p>	<p>Managing Risk Road safety – consequences of drink driving</p> <p>Independent Living Debt management Saving</p> <p>Mental health Exam stress</p> <p>English Persuasive Essay/Speech – Social Networking Sites</p> <p>Home Economics Consumerism and money management.</p>			<p>Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS) Dealing with Feelings</p>
2	<p>Road Safety Mistakes made on the road</p> <p>Healthy Bodies Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Improved decision making, Impact and consequences of choices.</p> <p>Relationship and Sexuality Qualities of good friendship Recognising our feelings Trusted adults: Safer Schools App</p> <p>Home Economics Healthy lifestyle plans: Avoiding harmful substances</p> <p>English Mobile Devices</p>	<p>Relationship and Sexuality Problems that can exist in relationships</p> <p>Home Economics A closer look at nutrition.</p> <p>English Body Image Technology Teen freedom</p>	<p>Relationship and Sexuality Relationship boundaries Implications of early sexual relationships STI's Teenage Pregnancy Safety and managing risk Different forms of abuse Sources of help Child Sexual Exploitation</p> <p>Emotional and Mental Health Positive thinking and dealing with stress (Samaritans)</p> <p>RE Valuing Oneself – Self Esteem and respectful Healthy Life Choices</p> <p>English Social media Healthy Earth Drugs in sports</p>	<p>Mental Health Positive thinking and dealing with stress</p>	<p>Independent Living Budgeting</p> <p>Parenting Impact of being a parent Child Sexual Exploitation</p> <p>RE Relationship Choices – Unplanned Pregnancy, Abortion, Contraception: (Natural/Artificial)</p> <p>Science – Single Award (Physics unit) Road safety – thinking and breaking distances and factors which influence them.</p>			<p>Childcare Safe proofing the home for a baby Child Protection Legislation and procedures in event of disclosure</p> <p>Health and Social Care Health and Safety legislation</p> <p>RE Year 13: Sexual Ethics – Relationships, Abortion, Contraception</p> <p>Year 13: Suicide – Reasons, Christian and Secular Perspectives, Consequences</p> <p>Year 14: Role of Conscience in Decision Making</p>
3		<p>Health and Whole Person 5 aspects of health</p> <p>First Aid Basic first aid procedures</p>	<p>Home Economics Teenage pregnancy Nutrition in pregnancy.</p> <p>Science Alcohol, smoking & drugs – impact on <u>health</u></p>					
External Agencies	<p>PSNI Online Safety - Sexting and Cyberbullying</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS) Managing Transition The Power of Pause</p> <p>Start 360 Targeted Life Skills programme</p> <p>Chest, Heart and Stroke NI Vaping</p>	<p>PSNI: Online Safety - Cyberbullying</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS) Healthy Relationships</p> <p>CARA Friend Diversity and Inclusion Respect workshops</p> <p>PIPS Building Healthy Relationships</p> <p>Love For Life iZone</p> <p>Chest, Heart and Stroke NI Vaping</p>	<p>PSNI Talk Online Safety – Sextortion</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS) Dealing with Feelings Healthy Relationships</p> <p>Start 360 Targeted Life Skills programme</p> <p>Chest, Heart and Stroke NI Alcohol Awareness: and the importance of Sleep</p>	<p>Start 360 Drug and Alcohol awareness</p> <p>PIPS Building Healthy Relationships</p> <p>Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS) Coping with Exam Stress</p> <p>Love For Life Icebergs and Babies</p>	<p>Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS) Coping with Exam Stress</p>	<p>YEAR 13 Enrichment Day: Youth Safety and Wellbeing Conference, Canal Court Hotel</p> <p>Love for Life Dating and Mating</p> <p>YEARS 13 & 14 Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools (EWTS) Coping with Exam Stress</p>		

Appendix 2 – RSE Terminology

- LGBTQIA+

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning and intersex

- Sexuality

Sexuality includes all aspects of the human person and relates to being male or female: it changes and develops throughout life. Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, cultural, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions.

- Transgender

A person whose sense of personal identify does not correspond with the gender assigned to them at birth. – (Oxford English Dictionary)

- Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is ‘a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse’. Young people above the age of 16 can also be the victim of sexual exploitation, even though they are legally eligible to consent to sexual activity. - (SBNI, 2014, page 7)

- Homophobic bullying

‘Any language, conduct, or behavior used to exclude, demean or threaten a person based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation.’ – (The Rainbow Project, 2010)

- Domestic Violence and Abuse

‘Threatening, controlling, coercive behavior, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’

- (Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools: A Guide for Schools – 2017)

- Domestic Violence and Abuse

‘Threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on one person by another where they are or have been intimate partners or family members, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation.’

- (DHSSPS/Tackling Violence at Home)

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons. The procedure is also referred to as ‘cutting’, ‘female circumcision’ and ‘initiation’. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. It is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland.

- Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland.

Appendix 3 – RSE Support Organisations

Health and Wellbeing

www.ccea.org.uk CCEA Relationships and Sexuality Learning Resources Hub; CCEA Wellbeing Hub

www.place2be.org.uk

www.changingcyclescommunity.com

www.heygirls.co.uk

Internet Safety

www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.safeguardingni.org

www.childline.org.uk

www.saferschoolsni.co.uk

www.childnet.com

Staying Safe

www.womensaidarmaghdown.org.co.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.start360.org

www.relateni.org

www.psni.police.uk

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

www.unfpa.org.uk

www.crisispregnancy.ie

www.loveforlife.org.uk

LGBTQIA+ Matters

www.barnardosrealloverocks.org.uk

www.school-out.org.uk

www.exceedingexpectations.org.uk

www.endbullying.org.uk

www.rainbow-project.org

www.cara-friend.org.uk