

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)



Summary Policy

**A full copy is available from the School Office*

Our School Values

St Patrick's College is an **inclusive Catholic school** where every young person is valued and respected. We welcome pupils of **all abilities, cultures, sexual orientations, gender identities and backgrounds**. We believe that each person is unique and made with dignity and worth.

As a Catholic school, our RSE programme is rooted in **Christian values**, recognising that *"the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit"* (1 Corinthians).

The Role of Parents and Families

We believe that **parents and guardians are the first and most important educators of their children**, especially in matters of relationships and sexuality. The attitudes and values young people develop are strongly shaped by their experiences at home.

Our RSE programme is designed to:

- **Support and complement what is taught at home**
- Strengthen the partnership between **home, school and community**
- Respect the beliefs, values and views of parents and families

What is Relationships and Sexuality Education?

RSE is about **learning how to build healthy, respectful and safe relationships** and understanding ourselves as whole people.

It helps pupils to:

- Understand friendships, relationships and emotions
- Learn about growth, development and human sexuality in an **age-appropriate** way
- Develop skills to make **informed, responsible and respectful decisions**
- Stay safe, including online and in their personal relationships

We believe that **sexuality is a gift from God**, which involves the whole person – body, mind, emotions and spirit – and affects how we relate to others.

How RSE is Taught in School

RSE is taught in a **sensitive, respectful and inclusive way**, in line with the Catholic ethos of the school.

- It is delivered mainly through **Religious Education**, as well as **Personal Development, Science, Home Economics and Citizenship**
- Lessons are **age-appropriate** and build in depth as pupils mature
- Teaching takes account of pupils' **emotional, physical and intellectual development**
- A **safe and supportive learning environment** is always created

The programme also meets the requirements of **Learning for Life and Work** and follows guidance from the **Department of Education**.

What Pupils Will Learn About

Across Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4 and Post-16, pupils learn about:

- Growing and changing
- Friendships and relationships
- Respect, dignity and equality
- Sexual health and reproduction
- Marriage, family life and parenthood
- The value and sanctity of human life
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Bullying, including homophobic language
- Online safety, sexting and digital wellbeing
- Consent, boundaries and inappropriate behaviour
- Coercive control
- Recognising unhealthy, abusive or exploitative relationships
- Ending violence against women and girls
- Staying safe and knowing how to seek help

All topics are taught **sensitively and responsibly**, in line with pupils' age and maturity.

Safeguarding and Wellbeing

Keeping pupils safe is at the heart of our RSE programme. Pupils are taught how to:

- Recognise risky or harmful situations
- Understand consent and personal boundaries
- Stay safe online and in real life
- Know who to talk to if they are worried or feel unsafe

RSE works alongside the school's **Safeguarding, Child Protection and Anti-Bullying policies**.

Our Aim for Young People

Through RSE, we aim to help pupils:

- Respect themselves and others
- Value difference and diversity
- Build healthy, positive relationships
- Make thoughtful, moral and responsible choices
- Grow into confident, caring and resilient individuals

Roles and Responsibilities

Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are the **first and most important teachers** of their children, especially in matters of relationships, values and sexuality.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Talk openly with their child at home about relationships and values
- Support the school's RSE programme
- Share any concerns with the school
- Work in partnership with staff to support their child's wellbeing and development

Pupils

Pupils are encouraged to take an **active and respectful role** in their learning.

Pupils are expected to:

- Treat others with dignity, respect and kindness
- Take part in lessons in a mature and respectful way
- Listen to different views respectfully
- Ask for help or speak to a trusted adult if they feel worried, unsafe or confused
- Follow school rules and expectations related to behaviour and safety

Teachers and School Staff

Teachers and staff are responsible for delivering RSE in a **safe, sensitive and age-appropriate way**, in line with the Catholic ethos of the school.

Staff will:

- Create a supportive and respectful classroom environment
- Deliver RSE lessons that are appropriate to pupils' age and maturity
- Respect pupils' dignity, privacy and wellbeing
- Follow safeguarding and child protection procedures at all times
- Work closely with parents and other professionals when needed

Designated Teacher for Child Protection

The Designated Teacher for Child Protection plays a key role in ensuring pupil safety.

They are responsible for:

- Supporting staff with safeguarding concerns
- Ensuring concerns are recorded and shared appropriately
- Liaising with parents and outside agencies when required
- Making sure safeguarding procedures are followed

The Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring that RSE is **well planned, inclusive, and safely delivered** in line with school policy and guidance.

The Principal ensures that:

- Staff are supported and trained
- Parents are informed and involved
- The RSE programme reflects both statutory guidance and the Catholic ethos of the school

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors has a **monitoring and oversight role**.

They are responsible for:

- Approving and reviewing the RSE policy
- Ensuring RSE is delivered in line with safeguarding and child protection guidance
- Supporting the school in providing a safe, respectful learning environment for all pupils

Working Together

RSE works best when **parents, pupils, staff and governors work together**. By sharing responsibility, we help young people to:

- Build healthy, respectful relationships
- Stay safe
- Make informed and responsible choices
- Grow in confidence, dignity and self-respect

Guiding Principles

1. Family and Relationships

At St Patrick's College, we teach that love, commitment and respect are at the heart of healthy relationships. We value marriage as a lifelong commitment where love is shared and children are welcomed. At the same time, we understand and respect that pupils come from **many different types of families**, and every family is treated with dignity and care.

We believe that every person deserves **respect, kindness and equality**, regardless of their background or who they are. Relationships should always be based on **respect, love and responsibility**.

2. Respect for Life

We teach that **every human life is precious and valuable**, from the very beginning. Respect for life is an important part of our school's values and helps pupils to think carefully about relationships, choices and responsibilities.

This principle supports pupils in understanding **why making thoughtful, respectful decisions matters**, particularly in relation to relationships and sexual behaviour.

3. Privacy, Safety and Child Protection

Pupils' privacy is always respected in RSE lessons. However, teachers cannot promise complete confidentiality. If a pupil shares something that shows they may be **unsafe or at risk**, staff must pass this information on so the pupil can be protected.

This includes concerns about:

- Abuse or neglect
- Exploitation
- Domestic violence
- Any situation where a pupil's safety or wellbeing may be at risk

All staff follow the school's **Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures** to help keep pupils safe.

4. Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs

RSE lessons are planned so that **all pupils can take part and feel supported**. Lessons and resources will be adapted where needed to meet individual learning needs, in line with each pupil's **Individual Education Plan (IEP)**.

This ensures that all pupils receive information in a way that is **appropriate, respectful and accessible**.

5. Asking Questions in RSE Lessons

Teachers create a classroom environment where pupils can ask questions and take part in discussions **in a respectful and mature way**.

- Proper and respectful language is encouraged
- Slang or offensive words are discouraged
- Teachers may not always be able to answer every question and may set sensible boundaries

Teachers use their professional judgement, taking into account the **age, maturity and needs of the pupils**, as well as the aims of the RSE programme.

6. Use of Visiting Speakers and Resources

Sometimes, visitors or outside organisations may support RSE lessons. These visitors are carefully chosen and prepared, and all materials used must reflect the **values and ethos of the school**.

A teacher will always remain in the classroom during these sessions, and follow-up work will be provided to support pupils' learning.

7. Parental Right to Withdraw

RSE is a required part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. However, parents and carers have the **right to request withdrawal** of their child from all or part of RSE.

If a parent chooses this option, the school will:

- Talk with parents to understand their concerns
- Work together to find the best way to support the pupil

Working Together

These guiding principles help ensure that RSE at St Patrick's College is:

- Respectful
- Age-appropriate
- Inclusive
- Rooted in Christian values
- Focused on pupil wellbeing and safety

LGBTQI+ Inclusive Policy

Pupil-Friendly Summary

Our School Values

St Patrick's College is a **welcoming and inclusive school** where everyone is treated with **respect and dignity**. We recognise that everyone is different, and that a person's **sexual orientation or gender identity** can be an important part of who they are.

All pupils have the **right to feel safe**, accepted and valued in school. No one should be treated unkindly or unfairly because of who they are or how they are perceived.

Feeling Safe and Supported

We understand that some pupils who are part of, or questioning whether they are part of, the **LGBTQI+ community** may face challenges such as:

- Bullying or name-calling
- Feeling left out or isolated
- Worries about acceptance
- Stress, anxiety or low confidence

Our school is committed to **supporting pupils' wellbeing** and making sure that no one experiences discrimination or prejudice.

Standing Up to Bullying

Queerphobic language or bullying is not acceptable in any form.

- Any bullying or hurtful language will be taken **seriously**
- Staff will respond quickly and fairly
- Pupils will be listened to and supported
- Incidents will be recorded and followed up

Everyone deserves to feel safe at school.

How Staff Support Pupils

Teachers and support staff help pupils feel safe and respected by:

- Teaching **kindness, empathy and respect**

- Helping pupils develop social and emotional skills
- Modelling respectful behaviour
- Working with the **Pastoral Team** to support pupils' wellbeing

Staff are trained to support LGBTQI+ pupils and to challenge bullying when it occurs.

What the School Aims to Do

We want to:

- Create a school where **everyone feels they belong**
- Help pupils understand and respect differences
- Teach pupils to challenge prejudice and stereotypes
- Build confidence and self-esteem for all pupils
- Promote understanding through lessons and assemblies

What the School Will Do

St Patrick's College will:

- Teach pupils about respect and inclusion across the curriculum
- Include LGBTQI+ topics in **RSE, PD and other subjects** where appropriate
- Run workshops and talks that promote understanding and kindness
- Offer clear ways for pupils to **report bullying or concerns**
- Provide named members of staff pupils can go to for support
- Celebrate diversity through assemblies, projects and displays

Who Pupils Can Talk To

There are **named pastoral staff and an LGBTQI+ lead teacher** in school who:

- Offer advice and support
- Listen to worries or questions
- Help pupils find the right support

Pupils are encouraged to speak to **any trusted adult** if they are worried about themselves or someone else.

Working Together

This policy helps everyone in school to:

- Treat others with respect
- Feel safe and accepted
- Celebrate differences
- Stand up against bullying

At St Patrick's College, **everyone matters**.

If You Experience LGBTQI+ Prejudice or Discrimination

Guidance for Pupils and Parents

What Pupils Are Advised to Do

If you are treated unfairly or unkindly because of sexual orientation or gender identity, you should:

- **Move away** from the situation if it feels unsafe
- **Report the behaviour**, including name-calling, teasing, online messages or bullying
- **Talk to someone you trust**, such as a teacher, form teacher, Year Head, Pastoral Care, school counsellor, family member or friend
- **Do not deal with it on your own** – sharing what is happening helps adults take action
- **Tell the bullying to stop**, if you feel safe to do so
- **Support others** by speaking up if you see bullying

No one should face bullying alone. All concerns will be taken seriously.

Guidance for Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to:

- Take an **active interest** in their child's school and social life
- **Contact the school promptly** if they believe their child may be experiencing bullying or discrimination
- Promote **respect and inclusion** at home
- Work **in partnership with the school** to support their child

School staff will listen carefully and arrange meetings where needed to agree next steps.

What Staff Will Do

If staff witness or are told about LGBTQI+ bullying, they will:

- Listen carefully and respectfully to the pupil
- Take all reports seriously
- Record incidents accurately and follow school procedures
- Reassure and thank the pupil for speaking up
- Take action to keep the pupil safe and supported
- Report incidents to Senior Leadership where required

Privacy and Support

- A pupil sharing their LGBTQI+ identity is **not a child protection issue**
- Pupils' **privacy and identity will always be respected**
- Staff will speak sensitively with pupils to ensure they feel supported
- If safeguarding concerns arise, appropriate procedures will be followed

Any pupil can experience queerphobic bullying, whether they are LGBTQI+ or not. Protecting a pupil's identity is always a priority.

Support Available in School

The school provides:

- **Named pastoral staff** pupils can go to for help and advice
- Additional support for pupils experiencing emotional or learning difficulties
- Signposting to **external support services**, such as Cara-Friend, where appropriate

Staff receive training to support pupils sensitively and challenge bullying.

Respectful Language

- Hurtful, offensive or queerphobic language is **not acceptable**
- Pupils will be challenged and helped to understand why such language is wrong
- Ongoing behaviour will be dealt with under school procedures

Additional Support and Consideration

Some pupils may be transgender, non-binary or gender diverse. The school will work with pupils respectfully and sensitively. Support may include:

- Use of a **preferred name and pronouns**
- Access to **gender-neutral toilets**
- **Alternative PE changing facilities**
- Inclusive PE and sport, where pupils can participate in ways they feel comfortable

Pupils are involved in conversations about their needs before decisions are made.

LGBTQI+ Inclusive Learning

Through RSE, Personal Development, assemblies and lessons, pupils will:

- Learn about respect, relationships and diversity
- Develop empathy and understanding
- Learn to challenge prejudice and bullying
- Feel supported if they are questioning or exploring their identity

Our Message

At St Patrick's College:

- **Everyone matters**
- **Bullying is not tolerated**
- **Support is available**
- **You are not alone**

If you need help, **speak to a trusted adult**.