

# Saint Martin's Catholic Academy

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## Relationships, Sexuality & Family Life Policy

**Approved by:** John Cullinane **Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> May 2025

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**Last reviewed on:** 14.05.25

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**Next review due by:** May 2026

## Mission

Saint Martin's Catholic Academy is a community of Catholic faith and learning committed to nurturing educated, informed, fulfilled and socially responsible citizens. The delivery of this commitment is based upon our mission statement which states 'St. Martin's should be a living example of a community in which the ideals are based on the doctrine and teaching of the Catholic Church

## Rationale For This Policy

As a Catholic School we believe that each person is an individual created by God and each has unique value. Therefore, the education of our students in Relationships, Sexuality and Family Life should be rooted in the teaching of the Catholic Church.

The school believes in a strong and supportive partnership with parents. We recognise the vital role of parents and the home in developing students' sense of dignity and responsibility in matters of sexuality and relationships. The role of the school is to assist and support the work of parents. Parents will be fully informed about the school's provision on these topics.

Teaching about relationships and sexuality must be approached in the same way as any other subject on the curriculum. We have a duty to ensure that there is no censoring of information and that students' questions are taken seriously and answered as fully, accurately and honestly as possible.

## AIMS

- To provide an education in sexuality which reflects the centrality of Christ and his love and contributes to growth in faith.
- To offer a programme of activities which will inform and equip each student to make the best choices personally, morally and spiritually, with wisdom and compassion
- The school provides a sex education programme, which will enable pupils, who may have access to explicit material on the internet and to be aware of the dangers of such materials
- Enable students to develop an understanding of and sensitivity to, their own and others' sexuality
- Create opportunities for students to deepen their knowledge, and consider their attitudes and behaviour in the light of Gospel values and the teaching of the Catholic Church
- Teach what is stipulated in the National Curriculum
- Prepare for adult life, marriage and parenthood in the context of the faith
- Be delivered in a positive and secure environment for discussion, reflection and critical thinking, and for enjoying relationships based on mutual respect, dignity and responsibility
- Provide a positive and prudent education in matters relating to sex and sexuality

## Policy Into Practice

Saint Martin's subscribe to 'Life to the Full' produced by Ten Ten. It is a fully resourced scheme of work in Relationships, Sex and Health Education for Catholic Secondary schools, and is approved by Catholic Dioceses throughout England & Wales. The scheme of work includes sessions for each year group 7 – 11 that includes video resources, assessment of learning, guidance for programme coordinators along with teacher training sessions and an online parent portal for links at home.

## Overview

Life to the Full Secondary

**Ten:Ten**  
Resources

Class	RE, PSHE or Tutor Time							Whole Year		
Main themes	All	Created and Loved by God			Created to Love Others		Created to Live in Community	All		
Sub themes	Religious Understanding	Me, My Body, My Health	Emotional Well-Being	Life Cycles	Personal Relationships	Keeping Safe	Living In The Wider World	Cinema In Education		
Sessions per programme	<b>Session 1</b> 50 minutes or 2 x 25-minutes or 2 x 50-minutes	<b>Session 2</b> 50 minutes or 2 x 25-minutes or 2 x 50-minutes	<b>Session 3</b> 50 minutes or 2 x 25-minutes or 2 x 50-minutes	<b>Session 4</b> 50 minutes or 2 x 25-minutes or 2 x 50-minutes	<b>Session 5</b> 50 minutes or 2 x 25-minutes or 2 x 50-minutes	<b>Session 6</b> 50 minutes or 2 x 25-minutes or 2 x 50-minutes	<b>Session 7</b> 50 minutes or 2 x 25-minutes or 2 x 50-minutes	<b>Session 1</b> Whole or half-year groups	<b>Session 2</b> Whole or half-year groups	<b>Session 3</b> Whole or half-year groups
Year 7	Who Am I?	Changing Bodies	Healthy Inside and Out	Where We Come From	Family and Friends	My Life on Screen	Living Responsibly	Facts of Life	Seeking and Offering Support	Looking in the Mirror
Year 8	Created and Chosen	Appreciating Differences	Feelings	Before I Was Born	Tough Relationships	Think Before You Share	Wider World	The Trouble with Max	Trust the Truth – Part One	Trust the Truth – Part Two
Year 9	The Search for Love	Love People, Use Things	In Control of My Choices	Fertility And Contraception	Marriage Updated: Feb 2023	One Hundred Percent	Knowing My Rights and Responsibilities Updated: Feb 2023	Love, Honour, Cherish	The Gift of Sex	The Gift of Self
Year 10	Authentic Freedom	Self-Image	Beliefs, Values, Attitudes	Parenthood	Pregnancy and Abortion	Abuse	Solidarity	Babies	Responding to an Unexpected Pregnancy	Safe Sex or Save Sex?

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Year 11	Self-Worth	Addiction	Eating Disorders	Birth Control	Pornography	STIs	Coercive Control	Truth and Lies	Truth or Lies – Part One	Truth or Lies – Part Two
Year 12								Common Room	Life in Sixth Form – Part One	Life in Sixth Form – Part Two
Year 13								Bakhita's Prayer	Understanding Human Trafficking	Taking Action

## APPENDICES

### Pope Francis on Homosexuality from 'The Name of God is Mercy':

"On that occasion I said this: If a person is gay and seeks out the Lord and is willing, who am I to judge that person? I was paraphrasing by heart the Catechism of the Catholic Church where it says that these people should be treated with delicacy and not be marginalized."

"I am glad that we are talking about 'homosexual people' because before all else comes the individual person, in his wholeness and dignity," he continued. "And people should not be defined only by their sexual tendencies: let us not forget that God loves all his creatures and we are destined to receive his infinite love."

"I prefer that homosexuals come to confession, that they stay close to the Lord, and that we pray all together," Francis added. "You can advise them to pray, show goodwill, show them the way, and accompany them along it."

1)

#### **EXTRACT FROM RELEVANT ASPECTS OF THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM DIRECTORY FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES IN ENGLAND AND WALES**

##### **Section 4.6. Love of Neighbour**

Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the values of family and social life are at the foundation of this element of study. This is because, love of neighbour, together with the Christian values, which promote respect for authority and citizenship, are laid in family life, and go on to nurture the variety of relationships into which we grow.

Love of neighbour is expressed in respect for life at all stages. This respect requires us to work for justice in society and peace between people and nations.

Implicit within it is an understanding of what it means to love oneself and one's bodily life. Respect for our own bodies, and those of others, is an expression of love.

Sexuality is to be understood as a gift of God requiring the virtue of temperance that enables us to always act towards another with love and respect. Sexual intercourse — the complete physical expression of the bond of love open to the generation of new life — is reserved for marriage. The vocation to religious chastity is also an expression of love, through radical dedication to God.

2)

#### **CURRENT STATUS OF SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION MARCH 2011**

##### **ACADEMIES AND SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION**

Academies have greater freedoms than maintained schools including not having to follow the National Curriculum. However, there are some requirements placed on academies as part of their contract known as their funding agreement. Each Academy's funding agreement varies so it can be difficult to make generalisations about requirements on academies.

In terms of sex and relationships education, this draft model funding agreement states that Academies must: '***Have regard to any guidance<sup>7</sup> issued by the Secretary of State on Sex and Relationships Education to ensure that children are protected from inappropriate teaching materials and they learn the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and for bringing up children***'. The only other curriculum requirements in the draft model funding agreement are that academies must teach English, Mathematics and Science and must make provision for the teaching of religious education.

**Table 1. The difference between the current legal status of SRE in maintained schools and academies**

<b><i>Maintained Schools</i></b>	<b><i>Academies</i></b>
Required to have a broad and balanced curriculum	Required to have a broad and balanced curriculum
<i>Must have regard to Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance from the DfE</i>	<i>Must have regard to Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance from the DfE</i>
Sex education is compulsory as part of the statutory Science Curriculum	Sex education is not compulsory
Requirement to have up-to-date policy on SRE	There is no requirement

★ At Saint Martin's we intend to follow the requirements of maintained schools and as such are guided by the following:

- The status of sex and relationship education has not changed at present. The Schools White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching'1 published in November 2010 states that children need high-quality sex and relationships education so they can make wise and informed choices and the government promises to work with teachers, parents, faith groups and campaign groups to improve SRE.
- The most up-to-date legislation relating to sex and relationships education (SRE) are contained within the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance from the DfE. The requirements are that: It is compulsory for all maintained schools to teach some parts of **sex education** i.e. the biological aspects of puberty, reproduction and the spread of viruses. These topics are statutory parts of the National Curriculum Science which must be taught to all pupils of primary and secondary age. The broader topic of **sex and relationships education** (SRE) is currently not compulsory but is contained within non statutory PSHE education within the National Curriculum and is strongly recommended within Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education Statutory guidance from the DfE. School governors are in law expected to give 'due regard' to this guidance.

"SRE is lifelong learning about physical, emotional and moral development. It is about the understanding of the importance of marriage for family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care. It is also about the teaching of sex, sexuality and sexual health. It is not about the promotion of sexual orientation or sexual activity..." (DFEE 2000)

- There is also a separate requirement for secondary schools to teach about HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.
- To qualify for Healthy School status, there must be a planned programme of CPSHE which includes SRE, in place
- Schools have a legal duty to ensure the well-being of their pupils and SRE contributes to this duty.
- Schools must ensure equal opportunities in the education they provide. An example of good practice is that PSHE education should cover equality and diversity based subjects including gender equality and non-violent, respectful relationships between women and men.
- **Exemption from sex education.** If the parent of any pupil in attendance at a maintained school requests that he may be wholly or partly excused from receiving sex education at the school, the pupil shall, except so far as such education is comprised in the National Curriculum, be so excused accordingly until the request is withdrawn.

**TABLE 2 – PROGRAMMES OF STUDY**

<b>Key Stage 3 – Sex and Relationships Education in the Curriculum</b>	
<b>Science: Statutory Programme of study: (QCA 2007)</b>	<b>PSHE: Non-statutory Programme of study: Personal Wellbeing (QCA 2007)</b>
<p>Range and content should include: Organisms, behaviour and health The human reproductive cycle includes adolescence, fertilisation and foetal development Conception, growth, development, behaviour and health can be affected by diet, drugs and disease</p> <p>The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to: Consider how knowledge and understanding of science informs personal and collective decisions, including those on substance abuse and sexual health</p> <p>Explanatory notes: <b>Sexual health:</b> includes issues related to contraception, pregnancy and disease <b>Diet, drugs and disease:</b> This includes...the effect of drugs such as alcohol, tobacco and cannabis on mental and physical health. It also includes the effects of bacteria and viruses, such as those associated with sexually transmitted infections.</p>	<p>Range and content that teachers should draw on when teaching the key concepts and processes include: examples of diverse values encountered in society and the clarification of personal values physical and emotional change and puberty sexual activity, human reproduction, contraception, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted infections and HIV and how high-risk behaviours affect the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities the features of positive and stable relationships, how to deal with a breakdown in a relationship and the effects of loss and bereavement different types of relationships, including those within families and between older and young people, boys and girls, and people of the same sex, including civil partnerships the nature and importance of marriage and of stable relationships for family life and bringing up children the similarities, differences and diversity among people of different race, culture, ability, disability, gender, age and sexual orientation and the impact of prejudice, bullying, discrimination and racism on individuals and communities</p>

### 3)

#### **TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION**

- There are a number of teaching strategies, including:
  - establishing ground rules with their pupils;
  - using 'distancing' techniques;
  - knowing how to deal with unexpected questions or comments from pupils;
  - using discussion and project learning methods and appropriate materials; and
  - encouraging reflection.
- A set of ground rules will help teachers create a safe environment in which they do not feel embarrassed or anxious about unintended or unexpected questions or comments from pupils. Ground rules might be developed, for example, one class worked out this set of ground rules together:
  - no one (teacher or pupil) will have to answer a personal question;
  - no one will be forced to take part in a discussion;
  - only the correct names for body parts will be used; and
  - meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way.

#### *Distancing techniques*

- Teachers can avoid embarrassment and protect pupils' privacy by always depersonalising discussions. For example, role play can be used to help pupils 'act out' situations. Case studies with invented characters, appropriate videos, and visits to theatre in education groups can all help pupils discuss sensitive issues and develop their decision-making skills in a safe environment.
- 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 are prepared 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 important to acknowledge this, and to suggest that the pupil or teacher or both together research the question later;
- If a question 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 been treated with respect, 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; and if a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of sexual abuse, they should follow the school's safeguarding procedure.

#### **4)**

### **STATEMENT FROM CESEW (CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE) RE TESTING FOR SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS**

The increasing number of young people nationally with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is leading to situations where some of our schools and sixth form colleges are being asked to participate in initiatives, e.g., led by the Primary Care Trusts (PCT) which encourage pupils and students to participate in testing for STIs.

CESEW understands that sometimes the tests are aimed at all students in a particular age cohort whilst sometimes the invitation is more explicitly aimed at those who think that they have been at risk of infection. The test is a simple urine test which may be offered in school by the school nurse who may also give the result and advice on what treatment is needed as appropriate. In some places results are texted to individual students' mobiles.

Whether to agree to such testing in schools and colleges must be the decision of the St Thomas Aquinas Multi Academy Trust. If such testing is made available at or facilitated through the school or college, parents will be advised of this and encouraged to discuss the matter with their daughter or son. Governors and parents may understandably be concerned that permitting the test may be perceived as condoning pupils or students being sexually active and thus not living within the teachings of the Church. However, the paramount concern is that young people who find themselves in this situation should be able to get swift treatment so that the long-term ill effects of STIs, which can include infertility, are averted.

The testing programme should also prompt review of the inclusion of the issue in the Sex and Relationships Education programme at that time for the relevant cohort of pupils. This and other relevant curriculum opportunities should provide for sensitive discussion of the issues in the context of behaviour and the Church's teachings and expectations. We offer the following guidelines to support governors in their decision making:

1. It is acknowledged that this is a complex and sensitive issue and that therefore consensus may be difficult to achieve. The governing body has a duty to ensure that the Church's teaching and therefore the Catholic ethos of the school is upheld. A compassionate response to the needs of pupils and students is a critical part of such ethos.
2. Whenever a young person confides in an adult within a Catholic school about a sexually transmitted infection, the response by the adult should be both compassionate and practical. Within the context of pastoral care the young person should be given the appropriate support and information with regard to medical treatment and advised to discuss the situation with their parents.
3. Safeguarding of children and young people is always a priority; the school or college should have regard to its own child protection and safeguarding policies so that it is ready to take appropriate action if, prompted by the availability of testing for STIs or other factors, a young person, under the age of legal consent discloses an inappropriate relationship.
4. The relationship between Catholic schools and parents is one of the great strengths of our Catholic school system. Therefore, it is expected that governing bodies will ensure that prior to their decision making on testing for STIs parents are included in a consultation process and their views given serious consideration. The governing body will also wish to ensure that it has taken account of expert professional advice.
5. In the case of a governing body agreeing to test for STIs in or via the school, the governors should ensure that parents are advised of this decision and given the opportunity to let the school or college know if they do not wish their daughter or son to participate. Particular sensitivity will be needed in colleges where all the students are legally above the age of consent. Governing bodies will wish to be sure that all communications are properly recorded.

6. Parents are the first educators of their children and we urge that governors, senior management and teachers encourage parents to talk to their children about these issues and other aspects of relationships education in age-appropriate manner. Likewise, every encouragement should be given to children to confide in their parents. Parents should have plenty of opportunity to see and comment on the school's Sex and relationships policy and programmes, and the resources to support these.

## **Conclusion**

We are confident that governors, parents and staff will give this complex issue their careful consideration and ensure that any decision supports both the Catholic nature and purpose of our schools and colleges and the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

## **5)**

### **THE CATHOLIC VIEWPOINT ON SOME ISSUES**

#### **ABORTION**

The Roman Catholic Church maintains the strongest objection to all unnatural forms of birth control and abortion. It teaches that abortion denies the most fundamental of all human rights - the right to exist. The destruction of any foetus amounts to murder. Any Catholic involved in an abortion, whether mother or medical practitioner, may be excommunicated from the church and its sacraments.

#### **CONTRACEPTION**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that artificial methods of contraception are wrong. Roman Catholics object to 'unnatural' forms of birth control because they believe the sexual act has two purposes - to unite the couple and to create children. Contraception however, separates these two aims. The Roman Catholic Church does permit 'natural family planning', which involves the couple having sex only during the woman's least fertile period.

While the church recognises the pain of a married couple who are unable to have a child, she says that "a child is a gift, not a right". For this reason, the church rejects all forms of contraception and new reproductive technologies, i.e., IVF - In Vitro Fertilisation, AIH - Artificial Insemination by husband and AID - Artificial Insemination by a Donor.

#### **DIVORCE**

Roman Catholics believe that marriage is a sacrament. Once the couple has received the sacrament of marriage, the marriage can never be dissolved or ended in God's eyes. If a Roman Catholic got a civil divorce, the couple would still be married in the church's eyes. A divorced Roman Catholic cannot get remarried whilst their ex-husband or wife is alive. Catholics believe humans simply do not have the authority to divide what God has joined together. A divorced Catholic is not encouraged to partake in other sacraments (like communion). A Catholic who does remarry in a registry office or in the church of another denomination whilst their first spouse is still alive, is not allowed to take communion, as they are committing adultery, because in God's eyes they are still married to their first spouse. Under certain circumstances, Roman Catholics can get an annulment of their marriage, from the Roman Catholic Church. An annulment means the marriage was never a real marriage. Annulments can be granted if:

- (i) one or both of the partners didn't understand the wedding vows, or were forced into marriage
- (ii) one or both partners lied during the vows (for instance, if they never intended to have children)
- (iii) the marriage was never consummated - the couple never had sexual intercourse after the wedding.

If the church grants an annulment, the couple are free to get married again in church, although they would still have to get a legal divorce.

#### **SEX**

Sexual Intercourse is thought to be so special in the Bible that it is likened to the relationship between Christ and the Church. It is because Christians believe that sexual intercourse is more than just a physical act that they believe that sex needs to be controlled. If it is sex that God uses to join you to your partner then separating from a sexual partner is going to hurt more. You leave a little of yourself with your sexual partner. Christians believe God wants to protect you from this pain. Most Christians believe that the correct place for sex to take place is within marriage and sex outside of marriage is condemned thirty times in the New Testament. Christians believe that their bodies are 'temples of the Holy Spirit'. So, sex for most Christians is the expression of a deep and loving, life-long union between two people and its only correct expression is within marriage. While it is true that some Christians, however, believe it is permissible for two committed people who are not married to have sexual intercourse, all the major Churches teach that sex is only for within marriage.



## **HOMOSEXUALITY**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that homosexual orientation is not a sin. The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church states 'The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.

However, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that homosexual acts are sinful. Like the single heterosexual, the Roman Catholic Church believes the homosexual must remain celibate.

For all Christians, homophobia is wrong.