



Nottingham Roman Catholic  
**Diocesan Education Service**

# Introduction to RSE in a Catholic Primary School

September 2026



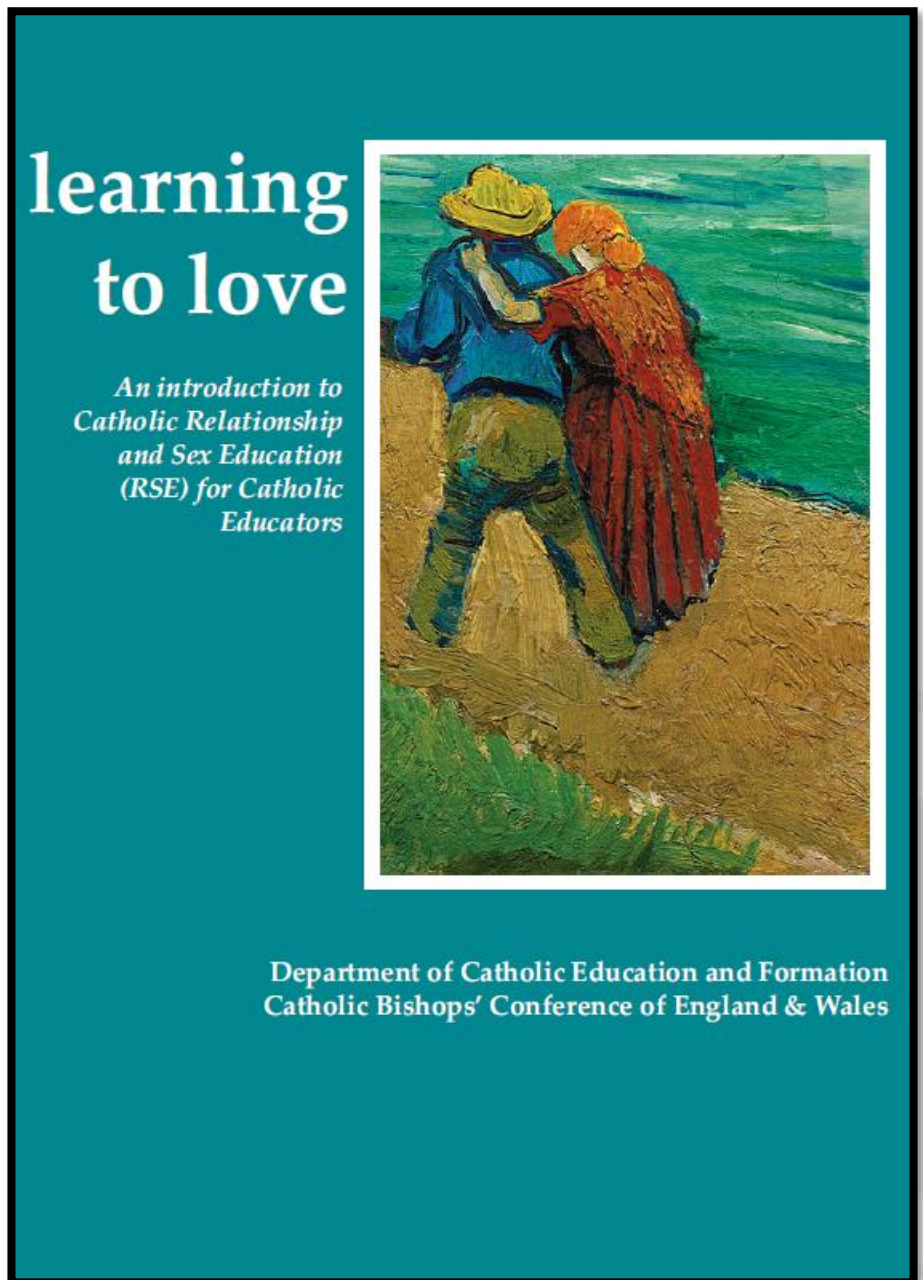
# RSE in a Catholic context



*Learning to Love – an introduction to  
Catholic Relationship and Sex  
Education for Catholic Educators*

Department of Catholic Education and  
Formation Catholic Bishops' Conference of  
England and Wales March 2017

This document contains some very helpful  
information about the nature of RSE in the  
context of a Catholic school.



## RSE within the context of Church Teaching – *Working in Partnership*

- Parents have the prime responsibility in teaching their children how to build healthy, loving relationships.
- Our schools play a vital part in *supporting* parents.
- **The content of what is taught must express the teaching of the Church, and should be delivered to suit the age of the children or young people to whom it is addressed.**
- The story of Adam and Eve reminds us that we aren't meant to be alone; we 'make sense' only in relationship with each other, and of all loving human relationships, the foremost is marital love.
- The Christian tradition calls marriage between a man and a woman 'Holy Matrimony' and, between the baptised, a 'Sacrament'. This is because the two parts of God's self-portrait come together definitively.
- All relationships point towards the relationship we have with our Creator, and prepare us for its fulfilment in the world to come.



## **RSE within the context of Church Teaching – *Working in Partnership***

- Our Catholic schools should always be places where all young people can begin to discern how God is calling them to find true happiness.
- Our schools need to be places where everyone feels valued for their innate dignity, even if young people are struggling to find themselves.
- They also need to be places where pastoral support is at the forefront of what they provide, so that no-one is abandoned.
- We are all called to learn how to love in ways that best approximate to the definition of self offering love as revealed to us in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- It is essential that schools work alongside parents in the process of formation for their children from a young age.
- At the forefront of any Catholic RSE programme is that:

*We have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.*

1 John 4:16



## RSE within the context of Church Teaching – *Learning to Love*

In Jesus, we have the model of perfect desiring love. He invites us to draw near and live within His love as if we were 'pitching our tent' within the shelter of his embrace. This is always and simply an invitation; there is no compunction to abide in his love, other than the prospect of depriving ourselves of joy if we refuse:

*Jesus said to his disciples, 'As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoke to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.'*

John 15: 9-12



## **RSE within the context of Church Teaching – *Human Dignity***

- At the heart of the Church's teaching on sexual ethics is the belief that our innate human dignity embraces also our bodies. Our dignity is not dependent on whether we are old or young, disabled or incapacitated, unborn or in the fullness of life, beautiful or otherwise.
- By being incarnate we have the dignity of being made in the image of the 'Word made flesh' and we have the prospect of eternal life before us.
- This insight, born of our faith and transmitted to us through the Church, ought to form a great part in how we learn to love each other. It forms the basis of much of the Church's teaching on life issues such as abortion and euthanasia but also on issues of social concern, and not least on the way we are bound to behave towards each other in all loving relationships.



## What is RSE?

- Relationships and Sex Education is lifelong learning about physical, moral, social and emotional development.
- It is the understanding of the importance of marriage and family life, stable and loving relationships, respect, love and care.
- We recognise that RSE is a shared responsibility between home and school, as advised by the Bishops' Conference:

***It is the privilege and responsibility of the family to inform and educate their children in all matters, pertaining to human growth and development, particularly the sensitive area of sex education.***

- RSE promotes children's self-esteem and emotional wellbeing.
- It helps them to form and maintain worthwhile and satisfying relationships, based on respect for themselves and for others, at home, at school and in the community.



## Primary Objectives

**Within a Catholic context, the purposes for teaching RSE are:**

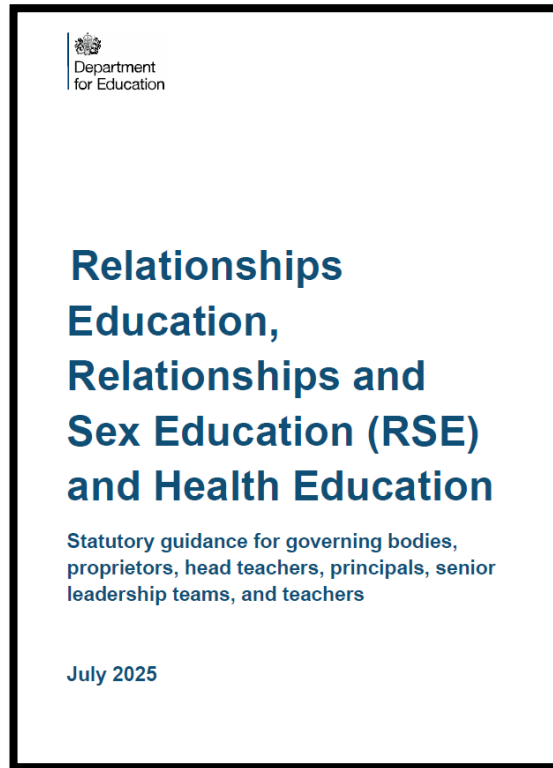
- To bring about growth in self-respect and self-worth, with children recognising that we are God's creation; created in his image and likeness.
- To appreciate and understand the role of God our Father as a creator of the world and the founder of production and purposeful relationships.
- To enable pupils to have an understanding that love, trust and faith is central to relationships.
- To promote an appreciation of the nature, purposes and value of marriage and the family.
- To enable pupils to have an understanding of themselves, their bodies and their emotional development.
- To enable pupils to reflect and recognise the qualities that helps them to grow, develop and sustain positive and effective relationships.



# DfE Statutory Guidance on RSE



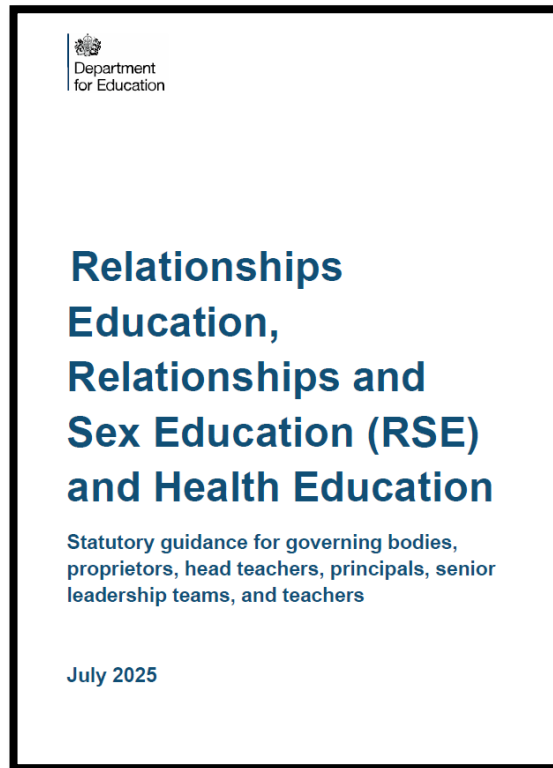
# New Statutory Guidance



- Towards the end of the summer term (2025), the Department for Education (DfE) published the updated statutory guidance for Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE).
- This guidance replaces the current 2019 guidance and must be implemented from September 2026.



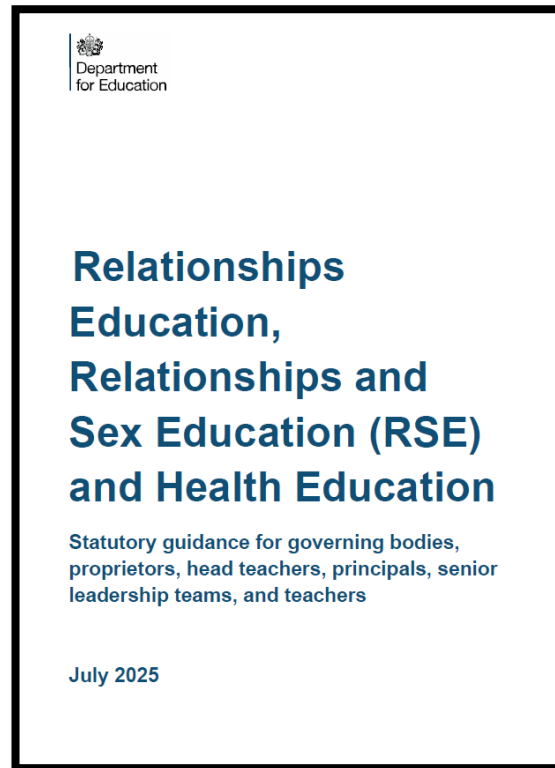
# New Statutory Guidance



- Once again, relationships education and health education are compulsory for both primary and secondary schools.
- Sex education is compulsory for secondary schools and may also be taught at primary level (though parents do have the right to request that their child is withdrawn from this). Please see DfE guidance paragraphs 16 – 23).



# New Statutory Guidance – Sex Education at Primary

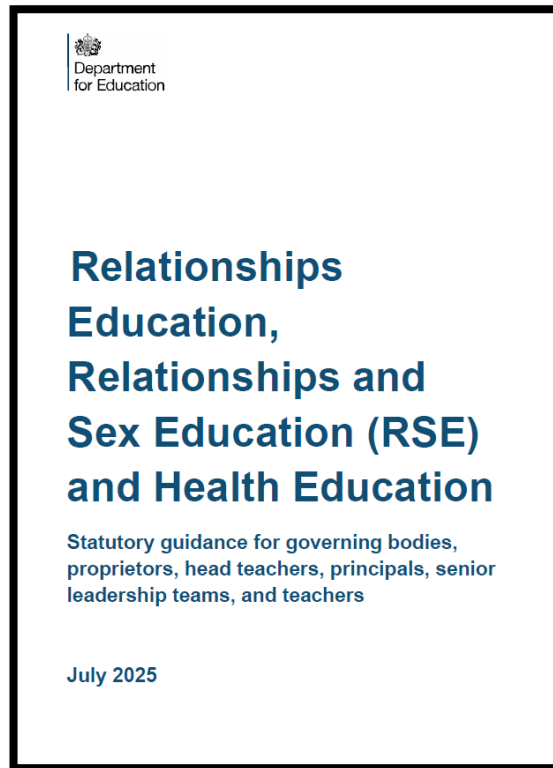


- Sex education is not compulsory at primary, however, the DfE 'recommends', *that primary schools teach sex education in years 5 and/or 6, in line with content about conception and birth, which forms part of the national curriculum for science. Primary schools should consult parents about the content of anything that will be taught in sex education. This process should include offering parents support in talking to their children about sex education and how to link this with what is being taught in school as well as advice about parents' right to request withdrawal from sex education'.*

(DfE Guidance – paragraphs 30 -31)



# New Statutory Guidance – Parents' Right to Withdraw



- *Parents have the right to request that their child be withdrawn from some or all of sex education delivered as part of statutory RSE ...*
- *Where primary schools provide sex education, headteachers must automatically grant a request to withdraw a pupil from it, other than content that is taught as part of the science curriculum.*
- *If a pupil is withdrawn from sex education, it is the school's responsibility to ensure that the pupil receives appropriate, purposeful education during the period of withdrawal.*

(DfE Guidance – paragraphs 16 – 23 )



# RSE Policy



Nottingham Roman Catholic  
Diocesan Education Service

## A MODEL POLICY FOR RELATIONSHIPS AND SEX EDUCATION

*Schools may sometimes be able to quote directly from this exemplification but should customise it to suit their own particular circumstances.*

### SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

In this policy the governors and teachers, in partnership with the Diocesan Education Service, the Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, pupils and their parents, set out their intentions about relationships and sex education [RSE]. We set out our rationale for, and approach to relationships and sex education in the school.

### Describe any consultation that has taken place e.g.

- pupil focus groups / school council
- questionnaires to parents / carers, any meetings etc.
- review of RSE curriculum content with staff and pupils
- consultation with wider school community e.g. school nurse
- consultation with school governors / foundation directors / Diocesan Education Service

### Implementation and Review of Policy

Implementation of the policy will take place after consultation with the local governing body. This policy will be reviewed every year/2 years by the headteacher, RSE Co-ordinator, the local governing body and staff. The next review date is [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#)

### Dissemination

The draft policy will be given to all members of the local governing body, and all teaching and non-teaching members of staff. Copies of the document will be available to all parents. Details of the content of the RSE curriculum will also be published on the school's website.

- The NRCDES has provided schools with a model RSE policy which will need to be tailored to the needs of the school.
- For further guidance on policy, please contact us at the NRCDES.



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The diocesan policy makes clear that:

*'All RSE will be in accordance with the Church's moral teaching. It will emphasise the central importance of marriage and the family whilst acknowledging that all pupils have a fundamental right to have their life respected whatever household they come from. It will also prepare pupils for life in modern Britain'.*



## RSE Policy

*Schools must have an up-to-date written policy for relationships education, or, where they teach sex education, for RSE. Schools must proactively engage and consult parents when they develop and review their policy, ensuring parents understand that effective RSHE is important for promoting and protecting the wellbeing of all children. Listening and responding to the views of pupils and parents helps to ensure that RSHE meets pupils' needs and that topics are taught at the right time to support children to build positive relationships and avoid harms before they occur. Schools must provide a copy of their policy free of charge to anyone who asks for one and publish the policy on the school website. Schools may need to include new content in RSHE to respond to emerging needs or issues in the school but should be careful to inform parents of any shifts away from the policy and continue to share relevant materials on request.*

(DfE Guidance – paragraph 12 )



# New Statutory Guidance – Relationships Education

The general areas remain very similar with some minor amendments.

| 2019                                | 2025                                  |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Families and people who care for me | Families and people who care for me   |
| Caring friendships                  | Caring friendships                    |
| Respectful relationships            | Respectful, <b>kind</b> relationships |
| Online relationships                | Online safety and awareness           |
| Being safe                          | Being safe                            |



## New Statutory Guidance – Health & Wellbeing

The general areas remain very similar with some minor amendments.

| 2019                        | 2025                               |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mental wellbeing            | Mental wellbeing                   |
| Internet safety and harms   | Wellbeing online                   |
| Physical health and fitness | Physical health and fitness        |
| Healthy eating              | Healthy eating                     |
| Drugs, alcohol and tobacco  | Drugs, alcohol, tobacco and vaping |
| Health and prevention       | Health protection and prevention   |
|                             | Personal safety                    |
| Basic first aid             | Basic first aid                    |
| Changing adolescent body    | Developing bodies                  |



## **New Statutory Guidance – Main Changes**

**Body knowledge and safeguarding** – there is a clearer emphasis on teaching children the correct scientific names for body parts, including genitalia and a recommendation for earlier sequencing of bodily changes such as menstruation.

**Online and personal safety** – moving beyond basic online safety, pupils now learn about digital wellbeing, managing online privacy (such as location settings), recognising digital fraud or scams, and critically engaging with online content. In terms of personal safety, the statutory content explicitly incorporates practical safety education concerning travel, road, rail and fire safety.



## **New Statutory Guidance – Main Changes**

**Health and wellbeing additions** – greater emphasis is placed on practical communication, building assertiveness, setting healthy personal boundaries, and managing everyday difficult emotions like frustration or disappointment. The inclusion of bereavement and coping with change/loss is more formally highlighted. In terms of substances, vaping and nicotine addiction are explicitly added alongside traditional teaching on drugs and alcohol.

**Legal and equality frameworks** – the guidance clarifies that teaching must reflect the Equality Act 2010 regarding biological sex and protected characteristics, ensuring that contested concepts like a generalised 'gender identity' are not taught as fact.



## New Statutory Guidance – Curriculum

*Schools have significant freedom to implement this guidance in the context of a broad and balanced curriculum. A school's curriculum should be in line with the needs of pupils. Effective, high-quality teaching will break down core knowledge and skills into manageable and well-sequenced units, including opportunities for pupils to practise skills so that they will be confident to use them in real-life situations. The curriculum should build knowledge and skills sequentially, with regular feedback provided on pupil progress. Lessons should ensure that all pupils are challenged, and assessments should identify where pupils need extra support or intervention.*

(DfE Guidance – paragraphs 49 – 50)



## **New Statutory Guidance – Resources / External Agencies**

*Working with external organisations can enhance delivery of these subjects, bringing in specialist knowledge and different ways of engaging with young people, but schools always remain responsible for the content and the way in which children are taught. Schools should check that external resources are accurate, age and stage appropriate and unbiased ... Schools are responsible for checking the credentials of any visitor or visiting organisation.*

(DfE Guidance – paragraph 52)



## **New Statutory Guidance – Openness with Parents**

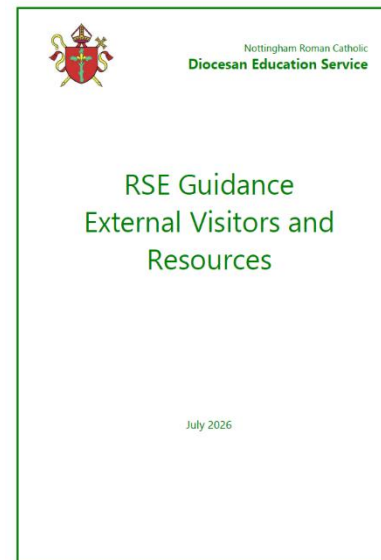
*Schools should take steps to pro-actively engage parents and make sure they are aware of what is being taught in RSHE. These steps might include inviting parents into school to discuss the curriculum content and the importance of RSHE for wellbeing and safety, inviting them to discuss any concerns, and supporting parents in managing conversations with their children about RSHE topics. Schools should show parents a representative sample of the resources that they plan to use, enabling parents to continue conversations started in class and should ensure that parents are able to view all curriculum materials used to teach RSHE on request.*

(DfE Guidance – paragraphs 55 – 56)



# New Statutory Guidance – Resources / External Agencies

In a Catholic school, all resources used must be in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church. In terms of external visitors, these must be well-briefed and must not include any representatives from organisations whose aims may conflict with the teaching of the Church.

The image shows the 'PROTOCOL FOR EXTERNAL SPEAKERS' document. At the top left is the Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service logo. To the right, the text 'Nottingham Roman Catholic Diocesan Education Service' is written in green. The title 'PROTOCOL FOR EXTERNAL SPEAKERS' is centered in bold. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text explaining the purpose of the protocol. This is followed by a checklist table with three columns: 'Name of Speaker', 'Question', and 'Answer'. The table contains two rows of questions, each with 'YES', 'NO', and 'FURTHER COMMENT' options. To the right of the table, there are two text boxes for 'Click or tap here to enter text.'.

**PROTOCOL FOR EXTERNAL SPEAKERS**

As an integral part of its educational vision for the holistic formation of children and young people, the Catholic Church expects Catholic schools to promote and uphold high standards throughout their [activities](#) and this includes visits from external speakers.

This is a checklist to be completed by the appropriate officer in your school prior to welcoming (and establishing collaborative relationships with) external speakers (and any [other](#) [representatives](#) they represent) to ensure that the Catholic character of your school is preserved and developed in the external speaker's communications with pupils and parents/carers:

| Name of Speaker | Question                                                                                                                                                   | Answer                                                                                                  | Actions needed/comment           |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                 | Will the Speaker be supervised, at all times during their visit?                                                                                           | YES <input type="checkbox"/><br>NO <input type="checkbox"/><br>FURTHER COMMENT <input type="checkbox"/> | Click or tap here to enter text. |
|                 | Have you carried out safeguarding checks (if appropriate) for the Speaker?<br>Please refer to CES guidance on:<br>1) DBS checks and<br>2) Disqualification | YES <input type="checkbox"/><br>NO <input type="checkbox"/><br>FURTHER COMMENT <input type="checkbox"/> | Click or tap here to enter text. |



## **New Statutory Guidance – Religion and Belief**

*RSHE should be sensitive to the religious background of pupils and schools must ensure they comply with relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010, under which religion or belief are amongst the protected characteristics. All schools may teach about faith perspectives on these topics. In particular, schools with a religious character may teach their distinctive faith perspective on relationships, and balanced debate may take place about issues that are contentious. For example, the school may wish to reflect on faith teachings about certain topics as well as how their faith institutions may support people in matters of relationships and sex. Schools should be clear when they are delivering content that reflects religious belief.*

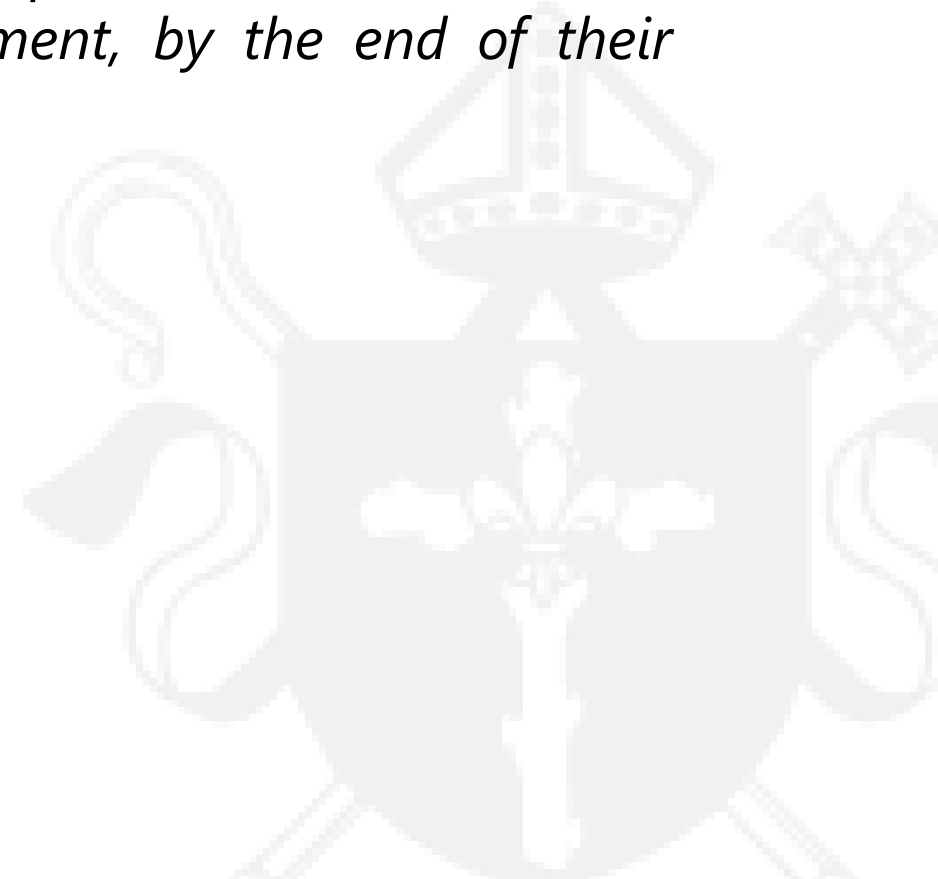
(DfE Guidance – paragraphs 73 and 74)



## New Statutory Guidance – LGBT Content

*Pupils should understand the importance of equality and respect throughout their education. They should learn about all the protected characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender reassignment, by the end of their **secondary** education.*

(DfE Guidance – paragraphs 73 and 74)



# NRCDES Primary Curriculum Framework



# NRCDES Primary RSHE Curriculum Framework

The primary framework document has been produced for schools in the Diocese of Nottingham. It is offered as a resource which schools may choose to adopt or adapt as they see fit. It has been designed using the Catholic Education Service 'Model Curriculum' and is fully compliant with the July 2025 requirements from the Department for Education.

- The Primary Curriculum Framework covers EYFS, KS1 and KS2 and is based on three core themes within which there will be broad overlap. It is adaptable to the age and ability of the pupils.
- Each theme covers the core strands of 'Education in Virtue' and 'Religious Understanding' as well as strands which cover the PSHE content of the theme.

The three themes are:

## **Created and loved by God (this explores the individual)**

*The Christian imperative to love self, made in the image and likeness of God, shows an understanding of the importance of valuing and understanding oneself as the basis for personal relationships.*



# **NRCDES RSHE Curriculum Framework**

## **Created to love others (this explores an individual's relationships with others)**

*God is love. We are created out of love and for love. The command to love is the basis of all Christian morality.*

## **Created to live in community – local, national & global (this explores the individual's relationships with the wider world)**

*Human beings are relational by nature and live in the wider community. Through our exchange with others, our mutual service and through dialogue, we attempt to proclaim and extend the Kingdom of God for the good of individuals and the good of society.*

\*From September 2026, the additional Health and wellbeing (H&W) and Relationships Education (RE) aspects of PSHE education will be compulsory in all schools – these aspects are reflected within each section.



# NRCDES RSHE Curriculum Framework Overview

- This document provides an array of strategies and resources which can be used to fulfil requirements within each respective key stage.
- It is worth noting that some of the elements of coverage referred to within the tables will already be part of the day-to-day Catholic Life of the school and reinforced through pupils' involvement within Collective Worship.
- It is also important that schools personalise the content to reflect supplementary resources they may be using.
- Schools do not have to use all of the resources referred to within the overview table.
- Discussion between staff with each key stage would be advised, to ensure a sharing of current strategies and resources being used at each level.



# Good Practice in RSE



# CES – RSE in Catholic Schools Quality Standards

| <br>Relationships and Sex Education in Catholic Schools<br>Quality Standard (Spring 2026)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Policies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |              |
| Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Minimum Evidence Required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Notes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | School Notes |
| 1. The RSE policy is consistent with the Catholic mission and ethos statement of the school/academy and in accordance with Catholic teaching. It includes an outline of provision.<br><br>2. The school has an up to date RSE policy which takes into consideration appropriate statutory and non-statutory guidance.<br><br>3. The school has the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding policy.<br>• Confidentiality policy.<br>• Equalities policy.<br>• E-safety<br>• Guidelines for outside visitors. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RSE policy in place approved by governors. Guidance for developing a policy and an exemplar policy can be found on the CES website.</li> <li>• All relevant policies in place and approved by governors.</li> <li>• Policies reviewed and signed off by governors every 1-2 years</li> <li>• Minutes of Governing Body meetings where approval has taken place</li> <li>• Statement regarding approach to RSE included in school's prospectus.</li> <li>• Details of RSE curriculum are published on the school's/academy's web site.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some policies may be combined.</li> <li>• In evidence column on the right, please indicate where policies may be found.</li> <li>• Policies should be developed in consultation with parents/carers, young people and governors.</li> </ul> |              |

- Policies
- Leadership & Management
- Professional Development
- Developmental Teaching & Learning
- Assessment & Evaluation
- Working with Parents & Wider Community
- Partnership Engagement



## **Ten:Ten Principles for RSHE**

I am made in the image and likeness of God

I am body and soul

I am made for relationships

I am called to grow as a person

I can grow in virtue

I can develop my conscience

I can contribute to my community

I learn this through story

I learn this through my parents

I learn this through faith and through the Church



Ofsted



## Statement from Ofsted

*From 1 September 2026, when the revised RSHE statutory guidance is introduced, schools are required to use this document to plan the delivery of RSHE. Similarly, Ofsted inspectors will be required to draw upon the revised guidance in their evaluation of the appropriateness of the curriculum for RSHE.*

*Inspectors will be proportionate in their approach to evaluating the implementation of recent guidance, and inspection is not a compliance check but a broader evaluation of the quality of provision for pupils. Inspectors will take into consideration the process, thought and steps the school has taken to ensure that the curriculum is moving in the right direction to fully comply with the statutory guidance and that this is a work in progress; the issue would be, if there was no evidence of this. Schools are therefore advised to keep a timeline and track the steps they have and are taking to implement the revised statutory guidance in readiness for inspection, should any concerns be raised.*





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