

Further information and advice

Some useful Church **documents** are:

- *Gravissimum Educationis*, Declaration on Christian Education (1967)
- *Familiaris Consortio*, The Church at the Service of the Family, (1981)
- Educational Guidance in Human Love, (1983)
- The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School (1990)
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994)
- *Evangelium Vitae*, The Gospel of Life (1995)
- The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, (1995)

(These documents are all accessible from the SCES website.)

Some **websites** which provide useful information and advice are:

- Scottish Catholic Education Service
www.sces.uk.com
- Linacre Centre for Health Care Ethics
www.linacre.org/frames.html
- Scottish Council on Human Bioethics
www.schb.org.uk
- Christian Medical Fellowship
www.cmf.org.uk/
- Cardinal Winning Pro Life Initiative
www.prolifeinitiative.org.uk
- Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child
www.spuc.org.uk
- Family & Youth Concern
www.famyouth.org.uk
- LIFE - UK pro-life organisation
www.lifeuk.org

SCES 75 Craigpark, Glasgow G31 2HD
Tel: 0141 556 4727; **Fax:** 0141 551 8467
Email: mail@sces.uk.com; **Web:** www.sces.uk.com

Scottish Catholic Education Service



Understanding Relationships & Moral Education in the Catholic school



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para 1 *Declaration on Christian Education* (1967)

Introduction

This leaflet is intended to assist teachers and other professionals working in Catholic schools to share an understanding of the **important principles** and the **key features** which should characterise programmes of Relationships and Moral Education.

The responsibility for disseminating its contents rests with Head Teachers who should ensure that all teachers, support staff and partner agencies are given the opportunity to understand the parameters for work in this area. Head Teachers should ensure that they discuss specific **protocols for partnership working** with all partner agencies which contribute to the school’s provision of education in areas of sexual health.

Responsibility for any aspect of education on sexual health in Catholic schools must not be transferred to other agencies.

Responsibilities of Teachers

Where teachers work with other professionals to provide advice and support to young people, it is vital that this collaboration is marked by reciprocal trust, mutual respect and understanding.

Teachers offering pastoral support and guidance to children and young people are called to show patience, sensitivity, and mature concern for their welfare. While they will wish to show an awareness of current social attitudes and a non-judgemental understanding of their students’ backgrounds, they should exercise care so as not to condone sexual activity outwith marriage. This will require particular sensitivity to be shown by teachers.

Support

Teachers will find particular advice and support on the provision of Relationships and Moral Education programmes in two key documents published by the Catholic Education Commission:

- ◆ **Guidelines** for *Teaching Relationships and Moral Education*
- ◆ **Guidance Notes** for *Teaching Relationships and Moral Education*

Details of any additional teaching guidelines and materials which are recommended for primary and secondary schools are available from each Diocese. In addition, support is available in the form of in-service training organised by Diocesan R.E. Advisors, SCES and the Faculty of Education at the University of Glasgow.

Parents must be kept informed by schools of the programmes which are being offered to students. Head Teachers should make every effort to recognise the place of parents as the first and foremost educators of children in this area. It may be appropriate in local circumstances for schools to work closely with parish clergy and Diocesan staff when involving parents in this work.

Key features

Relationships & Moral Education programmes include sex education at appropriate stages which:

- are built on a Christian understanding of the human person
- respect the dignity and promote the self esteem of each person made in the image and likeness of God
- develop appreciation of the importance of love in human relationships
- develop an understanding of sexuality as a gift from God and an important element of human personality
- respect the role of parents as the first and foremost educators of their children
- are designed to provide young people with knowledge, understanding and appreciation of all aspects of human growth: physical, emotional, moral, and spiritual
- are presented within a context of spiritual and moral formation
- develop understanding and skills for moral decision-making and responsible actions
- promote an understanding of marriage as a sign of relationship between God and humankind
- develop an appreciation of the importance of family life
- take account of social, cultural and media influences on young people
- provide factual information on human procreation at appropriate stages
- raise awareness of issues relating to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS at appropriate stages
- develop an understanding of the importance of personal safety and the dangers of abuse at appropriate stages.

Important principles

Any information, or advice provided to a young person will be appropriate to age and stage of development in supporting:

- the rights of young people to be positively and prudently informed on moral and sexual issues
- the rights of parents to be consulted and informed about the content of such programmes
- the sanctity of human life
- relationships based on love and self-giving
- the virtues of modesty and chastity
- the forming of conscience
- the values of respect, trust, honesty and compassion
- the importance of personal responsibility
- the importance of marriage and the family
- the value of abstinence outwith marriage.

Protocols for partnership working

Head Teachers should ensure that protocols are agreed with all professionals to guide any collaborative approaches.

1. The contributions of all partner agencies should be planned carefully to complement a school's mainline curriculum provision, rather than to replace the school's planning.
2. The local Diocese should be consulted on the use of any partner agency to contribute to aspects of these programmes.
3. The Head Teacher's responsibility for determining appropriate content and delivery of all aspects of relationships and sex education should be highlighted at the start of any discussions.

Protocols for partnership working (contd.)

4. All personnel contributing to a Catholic school's programme of relationships and sex education should be briefed on the **key features** and **principles** of the Church's guidance on *Teaching Relationships and Moral Education* and should be asked to show respect for these when working in a Catholic school.
5. A preliminary meeting should be held with the partner agency to plan any event(s) and to clarify purpose, links with school curriculum etc.
6. It will be important, in this meeting, to clarify the handling of any disclosure and confidentiality issues, should they occur, in line with the policy of the particular education authority.
7. All materials being shown or distributed to pupils should be previewed and approved, by the responsible school staff, in terms of suitability to age and stage and appropriateness in terms of the Church's guidelines.
8. Care should be taken to ensure that materials do not promote moral views which are at odds with Catholic teaching, as outlined in the CEC's *Guidance Notes on Teaching Relationships and Moral Education*.
9. The class teacher should remain present throughout any presentation to pupils by any outside agency.
10. Sensitivity should be shown towards the legitimate interests of parents and carers in any such activities. They should be informed and consulted, as appropriate. In some cases it will be wise to consult those who are recognised as representatives of the parent body of the school. In other cases, it will be sufficient to inform parents of a particular event which involves their children.

Statutory framework for the conduct of sex education

“All schools are expected to provide sex and relationships education . . . consistent with the principles and aims of national guidance on the conduct of sex education.”

Respect and Responsibility, 2005

Circular 2/2001, issued by the Scottish Executive Education Department in March 2001, provides this guidance:

- ◆ education about sexuality and relationships should reflect the cultural, ethnic and religious influences within the home, the school and the community
- ◆ it is recognised that religious authorities with a role in denominational education do provide guidance for their denominational schools and that right will continue as at present
- ◆ sex education could be defined as a lifelong process whereby children and young people acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, and develop beliefs, attitudes and values about their sexuality and relationships within a moral and ethical framework
- ◆ sex education [should be provided] within a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education and religious and moral education
- ◆ in preparing programmes and in consulting with parents and carers and responding to their views, schools should be sensitive to their parental concerns and to cultural and religious views which they may hold and which may conflict with particular aspects of the planned programme
- ◆ teaching materials should be selected with great care and sensitivity to the age and understanding of the pupils.