

Church of England and Methodist Schools
Diocese of Blackburn and North Lancashire Methodist District

Sex and Relationship Policy Guidance – A Christian Perspective
(A Suggested Structure for Church Schools)

1. Mission Statement

As with all policies, this one ought to start with your mission statement.

2. Vision

Our Church Schools respect each child as a unique being, a child of God, loved and accepted in an ethos that encourages and celebrates difference. We endeavour to afford sustainable opportunities for holistic academic and personal development with a life and moral code based on Christian values and teaching.

As role models we all will seek to adopt a way of life, based on Christian principles, which both respects the human body and seeks to ensure health and well-being.

Whatever their own experience of parental relationships and family life, whether happy or unhappy, children need to glimpse something of the wonder, love, commitment and security which are possible in marriage and family life. They need to be presented with the ideals to which they might aspire. The reality, however, of individual pupils' own experiences also needs to be accepted so as to affirm and value all of them and to help them cope with their experiences. Only to present the "reality" which currently prevails is to risk the loss of any vision of the ideal.

3. Principles

The Diocese of Blackburn and The North Lancashire Methodist District recommend that Primary Schools should include Sex and Relationship Education in their curriculum.

Within the Church School the Christian ethos will provide the context within which all personal development takes place. This means that Christian values and attitudes with the emphasis on the importance of marriage, the family and stable relationships to build a child's self-esteem, self-awareness and a sense of moral responsibility will permeate all the curriculum – both explicit and "hidden".

- a) Sex and Relationship Education is part of a child's broad, balanced curriculum, integral to the basic curriculum of the school and part of the child's all round development.
- b) There should be a clear policy statement about the content and delivery of sex and relationship education in the school brochure and a fuller scheme of work within the school, related to the Key Stage statements to which parents may have access on request. This may form part of the wider Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme in the school.

- c) Accountability for the implementation of the Sex and Relationship Education Policy lies with the governing body of the school.
- d) The school must recognise the legal right of withdrawal from sex education, other than that delivered through National Curriculum Science, and be sensitive to those parents who find the delivery of some explicit teaching in school unacceptable.
- e) Sex and Relationship Education must be of the highest quality in order to counteract inappropriate influences from the media and elsewhere.
- f) Regardless of background and behaviour, pupils are to be accepted and cherished within the Church School.
- g) Schools should provide a safe and secure environment in which marriage and other long-term human relationships can be explored. This implies that the teaching is designed to present concepts and ideas the individual pupils may choose to relate to their own experience.

4. **The Impact of these Principles on Children**

In a caring, supportive Christian ethos and from a Christian perspective, all children will be:

- Physically healthy, with regular access to a range of health promoting physical activities plus quality medical care
- Spiritually healthy, with opportunities to be nurtured in the Christian faith and to respect those of a different faith or no faith position
- Mentally healthy with support and enriching stimuli whilst developing a balance of intellectual and practical activity with quiet reflection
- Emotionally healthy, with development of self-worth, self-being and empathic insights to others
- Socially, morally and culturally healthy with a well developed code of conduct and values based on Christian principles
- Sexually healthy, understanding their own sexuality, the need for self care and why they should have respect and responsibility for the well being of others
- Able to understand how to look after their bodies and how to make informed decisions about appropriate ways of living

Sex and Relationship Education is part of the wider responsibility of the school to help individuals to develop following the example of Christ. It is an integral part of the wider school policy to promote in pupils so that they have:

- A positive and secure personal identity and sense of their own value
- Attitudes of respect and concern for others, founded on Christ's example of self-giving love
- Acceptance of those who differ, yet challenging those behaviours and attitudes which exploit others and do not reflect Christian values
- Reconciliation and forgiveness

The school Sex and Relationship Education programme should:

- Encourage children to appreciate that sexual feelings and activities are an integral part of human experience and an expression of God's creative love
- Present children with Christian views of sexual relationships and of their place in a lifelong commitment
- Prepare children for, and to enable them to cope with the changes to their bodies, instincts and feelings as they enter puberty, and to understand the changes to the bodies, instincts and feelings of the opposite sex
- Provide information which is clear and appropriate to pupils' age and maturity; to offer an acceptable and accurate vocabulary for discussion about their bodies

5. Difficult Questions & Sensitive Issues

The Church School's Sex and Relationship Education Programme should provide opportunities for children to 'talk honestly and openly'. At the same time, primary schools have to respect the pace of children's maturation. It may be felt that some topics (which each school should identify) are best postponed until the secondary school years. There are also sensitive or controversial topics over which some staff, parents and governors may have reasonable concerns.

A Church School should list sensitive or controversial topics (if any). It may, for example, decide not to teach about or answer questions on rape, oral sex, exploitative or violent sexual practices, incest, abortion, prostitution, homosexuality, contraception, Aids/HIV, masturbation or about forms of sexual intercourse or foreplay.

For each such topic, a school should make its own decision whether:
to include it in the taught Sex and Relationship Programme;
or not to teach it directly, but to answer children's questions
or state that the topic will not be taught or discussed in class

Schools may wish to include here a statement such as:

If a child asks a question on any topic listed, teachers will explain that this is a matter not dealt with in school, that the child should consult his/her parent for an answer. The school will normally seek to inform parents when such a question is asked.

This list should form part of the information sent to parents concerning Sex and Relationship Education in school.

Some types of question, or a request to a teacher (or other staff member) for personal advice, may occasionally indicate a case of sexual abuse or other child protection matter. Schools should also include in their policy a statement such as:

In some cases, a question or request for advice may indicate the pupil to be at risk or in danger, in which case appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the school's written policy and procedure for Child Protection. This also means that if a pupil puts a private question to a teacher or other member of staff and requests secrecy, no promise of secrecy or confidentiality will be given, but with the reassurance that any steps taken will always be in the pupil's best interest.

6. Legal Requirements

It is the statutory responsibility of the Governing Body to decide whether or not a Primary School should teach sex education and, if it does so, to approve the policy and teaching syllabus. A statement of their decision must be included in the school prospectus. All schools must teach biological aspects laid down in the Science National Curriculum at each Key Stage. Sex and Relationship Education, where provided, must be given in such a manner as to encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and the value of family life. Staff should be involved in discussions, and parents fully consulted.

7. Right of Withdrawal

Parents have the legal right to withdraw their child from all or any part of the School’s programme for Sex and Relationship Education, except those elements which are required by the Science National Curriculum.

Parents who may be considering the exercise of this right should first make an appointment with the Headteacher to discuss what such a decision may involve.

8. Monitoring and Evaluating the Scheme

Day to day monitoring is the responsibility of the SRE/PSHE co-ordinator. Continuous monitoring and reporting to the governing body will be part of the Senior Management Team review systems. All staff and governors will regularly monitor to determine the effectiveness of the Policy and its impact upon children. Information should be included in the relevant sections of the Self Evaluation Form (SEF).

9. Writing a Policy

When Schools are compiling their own policy they may wish to refer to the guidance provided at the start of this document. However, the Policy must reflect the unique situation of your own Church School.

Suggested elements:

Mission Statement
Principles
Monitoring
Dissemination
Difficult Questions

Vision
Aims (impact on children)
Links with other Policies (Child Protection, Equal Opportunities, Curriculum)
Legal Requirements (including the Right of Withdrawal)
Sensitive Issues