

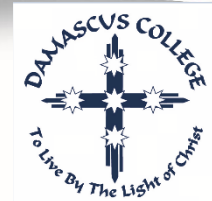


Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Reviewed: October 2018

Ratified: September 2020

Next Review: 2021



1 Rationale

This policy seeks to assist Catholic school communities in supporting families in the important area of Relationships and Sexuality Education in pluralist 21st century Australia. Families seek to nurture their children's values of personal dignity, identity, sexuality, family life and interpersonal relationships. Catholic school communities seek to assist families in this sacred work.

Leaders in Catholic schools have an opportunity, when working with families, staff and students to contextualize Catholic beliefs concerning Relationships and Sexuality Education, so they can be experienced meaningfully by all members of the school community.

This policy promotes dialogue and deep reflection between all members of the school community, and beyond recognizing the richness of the Catholic story as a source of wisdom regarding Relationships and Sexuality Education.

Catholic Education Ballarat, is committed to child safe environments. This policy complements existing BDSAC policies that seek to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students is protected at all times. This is one of several policies that seek to ensure all students' safety and wellbeing is always protected. In conjunction this policy and the scope and sequence also address the Child Safe Standards particularly Standard Seven which requires schools to deliver appropriate education about healthy and respectful relationships (including sexuality), resilience and child abuse awareness and prevention¹

2. Policy Statement

This policy is mandated by the Bishop of Ballarat for all Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat. The Relationship and Sexuality Policy respects the God given dignity of each student and focus on the development of a school community that is safe, supportive and inclusive of all.

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat are committed to providing Relationships and Sexuality Education in partnership with families that nurtures the flourishing of each student. Relationships and Sexuality Education is committed to fostering student well-being and personal dignity through age appropriate learning in the areas of sexuality, personal development, anatomy, physiology, morality and spiritual development.

¹ Victoria Department of Education and Training, *Child Safe Standards: Creating a safe environment*, accessed 4 June 2018 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx>

Learning is both developmentally appropriate and responsive to multiple elements that embrace growth in self-knowledge and self-control. Learning is interdisciplinary, informed by the Awakenings Religious Education Curriculum and the Victorian Curriculum.

3. Principles

1.0 Principle 1

God is loving communion

God is love and God's life is expressed through loving relationships. Created in God's own image, humanity is inscribed with the capacity and responsibility for love and communion. Personal Relationships and Sexuality Education promotes bonds of communion with others that reflect God's love and recognizes the image of God in both the giver and receiver.

The Scriptures present the creation of man and woman as creation in the image of the God of love and communion. "God said, 'Let us make humanity in our image and likeness.' So God created humanity; male and female God created them." (Genesis 1:26-27)

Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person, especially the capacity to love and procreate and more generally to form bonds of communion with others.² In male and female we recognize difference and complementarity that inform and enhance a communion of love.³

2.0 Principle 2

The Dignity of the Human Person

Created in the image of God, all human life is sacred. Humanity has a radical equality before God and all human beings have an innate dignity and inestimable worth. Personal relationships that mirror God's love and communion are characterized by respect for God's image in oneself and in the other person.

Education in sexuality and relationships promotes the dignity of every human life and recognizes that in each person God "wonderfully created human nature and still more wonderfully redeemed it".⁴

3.0 Principle 3

Gradual maturing of the Human Person

From his earliest years "Jesus grew in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52). The human person from the moment of conception is on a gradual journey of growth and maturation. The capacity and responsibility for love and communion expressed through life-giving relationships also grows and develops through one's life. Relationships bring opportunities for joy and bonding, but they can also involve experiences of brokenness and failure. The God of love and compassion is with us in times of joy and in times of struggle.

Education in sexuality and relationships should provide information reflective of children and young people's growing maturity. The information has to come at a proper time and in a way suited to their age.⁵

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd. ed., 2331-2332, accessed 17 May, 2018, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a6.htm

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd. ed., 2333.

⁴ The Roman Missal 2010, The Easter Vigil, Prayers after the Readings

⁵ CATHOLIC CHURCH. (2016). *The joy of love = Amoris laetitia : Post-synodal apostolic exhortation.*, 281 accessed 18 May, 2018

4.0 Principle 4

Freedom and Responsibility

Every person has a fundamental right to fullness of life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to ourselves, one another, our families, the larger society. The human condition means we have the fundamental capacity for making choices. Positive choices can enrich relationships committed to communion and love. However human weakness can result in negative choices that are harmful to one's self and others.

Relationships and Sexuality Education can inform and empower young people in discerning the impact that choices have on themselves and others and equip them with the necessary skills to accept and grow in their responsibilities "discovering that freedom is not the ability to do whatever you want, but the faculty of living in order to do what is good"⁶

4. Definitions

Families:

Parents and caregivers who are the primary educators of their children.

Sexuality:

Sexuality is a fundamental dimension of the human person. It is the basis of our capacity to relate to others, to foster friendship, to feel affection for another, to love, to experience intimacy and to procreate. This dimension of being human relates to physical, social and spiritual growth and development for every person. (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], 1994, para. 2332).

Personal Development:

Use of personal, interpersonal, behavioural, social and cognitive skills and strategies to promote a sense of personal identity, wellbeing and to build and maintain positive relationships

Anatomy and Physiology:

Understanding of different parts and systems of the body. The way in which the body grows and changes over a lifespan.

Spiritual Development:

The capacity to have right relationships with self, others, creation and God. "A Catholic Spirituality should also bring the fruits of gratitude, joy, and celebration to people's lives. Growth into such a holiness is a lifelong journey; it is sustained by community and conversation" (Groome, 2002, p. 275)

https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

⁶ CATHOLIC CHURCH *Pontifical Council for the Family, 2016, p. 2.*

Moral Development

The process of understanding the good that ought to be done and the ongoing development of the capacity to exercise personal freedom to choose to act in accord with the good. This involves an understanding of values and the recognition of moral experience as a being drawn to the good as it is understood. Our lives and our particular actions become genuinely moral (or ethical) when we live with the awareness of being in relationship with all other people. (CCC, 1994, para. 1935).

5. References

- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (1994). Homebush, NSW: St Pauls
- Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. (2017, September 09). Commitment statement to child safety. Retrieved from <http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/getmedia/b5d43278-51b9-4704-b45a-f14e50546a70/Commitment-Statement-A4.aspx>
- Groome, T. (2002). *What makes us Catholic? Eight gifts for life*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Pontifical Council for the family. (2016). Unit 3.2 I bring my freedom into play. *The meeting point: Project for affective and sexual formation*. Retrieved from http://educazioneaffettiva.wpqlauco01.qlauco.it/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Meeting_Lesson3.2_Educator.pdf
- Pope Francis. (2016). Post-synodal apostolic exhortation: *Amoris Laetitia: on love in the family*. Retrieved from http://m.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papafrancesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf
- Victoria Department of Education and Training, *Child Safe Standards: Creating a safe environment*. Retrieved from <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/childprotection/Pages/safeenviro.aspx>

6. Appendices

Guidelines

1. ***Fullness of Life for All: Relationships and Sexuality Education, Diocese of Ballarat*** provides an accompanying scope and sequence for both primary and secondary schools to support the implementation of this policy. When followed in conjunction with the policy, the scope and sequence provides the direction in which schools can plan, teach and assess in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education within the Catholic school context.
2. Schools are to ***discern*** how best to implement their policies and underpinning principles into practice in their own context. A set of guiding questions could be a starting point to inform dialogue and guide schools' procedures in the future. (see Appendix Two)
3. Planned programs pro-actively addressing areas such as child and adolescent development, effective communication and sexuality, are an important component of Relationships and Sexuality Education. It is imperative that Relationships and Sexuality Education is not seen solely as planned programs. All people who work in Catholic Education share the responsibility to support young people in their journey through childhood and adolescence. Scripture, tradition and witness are a source of wisdom allowing participants (including adults) to inform, form and transform themselves and the world.
4. Schools share in the educational partnership with families. To assist in this, school communities need to prioritise opportunities for formation of families in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education and for families to be informed of the learning and teaching that is taking place in this area. The four principles of this policy are integral to the Catholic Story and Vision. Therefore every student should have the opportunity to participate in "positive and prudent sexual education," which the Vatican II Declaration on Education invites schools to provide for all students.
5. The connection between the formal curriculum and the fostering of high quality interpersonal relationships among teachers, students, parents and support staff sets the tone and priority of Relationships and Sexuality Education. Teachers are in a powerful position to counter balance exposure to messages from sources that often exploit the developing young person.
6. The following areas are important sources for the, planning and implementation of policy and procedures regarding Relationships and Sexuality Education within a school context
 - Religious Education
 - The Spiritual dimension
 - Health and PE –focus area relationships and sexuality
 - Ethical Capabilities
 - Personal and Social Capabilities
 - Critical and Creative Thinking

It is crucial that foundational principles of Catholic Anthropology (see Policy Principles) will illuminate dialogue, learning and teaching and ongoing reflection.

7. Catholic Education Ballarat will work in partnership with schools across the diocese providing support to assist the implementation of the school's policy. Each school will need to ensure appropriate professional learning opportunities are available for school staff.

Appendix Two:

Guiding Questions for discernment.

- *How does the school's Vision and Mission statement, Learning and Teaching and other relevant school based policies align with this Relationships and Sexuality Policy?*
- *Where and how is Relationships and Sexuality Education explicitly targeted across the curriculum in a rigorous, consistent, methodical, intentional manner?*
- *In what ways are the four principles in this policy evident in learning and teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education?*
- *What plans are in place for the school to effectively provide relevant staff with the opportunities to participate in ongoing, professional learning and formation that assists in knowledge, critical reflection and discernment in the area of Relationships and Sexuality Education in a contemporary Catholic School?*
- *In what ways are families informed of learning and teaching concerning Relationships and Sexuality Education? Does it include a variety of means of communication including face-to-face sessions and meetings noting aspects of the program that is to be taught?*

Appendix Three:

Recommended resources to support this policy

- FULLNESS OF LIFE FOR ALL: Relationships and Sexuality Education
Diocese of Ballarat. Catholic Education Ballarat. 2018
- Choicez Media: Things are changing. Choicez.com.au. 2005