



Fertile Heart

# **Fertile Heart & Guidance on RSE from the CES**

How A Fertile Heart meets the Catholic Education Services guidelines for implementing the Department of Education's statutory requirement to teach Relationships and Sex Education



# Introduction

The Catholic Education Service published the updated guidance for Catholic schools on RSE in September 2019. As always [on behalf of the Bishops of England and Wales] the CES is clear that teaching about love, and sexual relationships in a Catholic school must be rooted in the Catholic Church's teaching about what it is to be truly human in Christ. The Fertile Heart curriculum is wholly aligned with the CES vision for exploring with children what it means to live well in relationships with others within a positive framework of Christian virtue. It explains to children that their inherent dignity derives from them being made in the image and likeness of God. It demonstrates how to sustain and deepen this identity by exploring the impact of key virtues and their corresponding vices on behaviour in a non-threatening and non-judgemental way.

## An Integrated Approach – Partners in a Shared Task

- The CES rightly exhorts schools to introduce a “well-planned programme” of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE). Fertile Heart has been designed to enable teachers working across phases or in collaboration with colleagues in separate phases to see clearly where the developmental themes begin and progress throughout the modular programme.
- We fully agree with the CES [and in accordance with the statutory requirements of the DfE] that parents should and must be involved as much as possible in the planning and approval of suitable materials for their children attending Catholic schools. This is why the content of both teacher and pupil books are available to browse and view online at any time free of charge.
- We believe this considerably aids and facilitates the ability of the school to conduct a clear and transparent dialogue with parents and carers over RSHE content/issues addressed by the FH programme as well as enabling parents/carers to pose any questions or queries they might have regarding content well in advance of their child being taught a particular lesson. This goes beyond the bare minimum of simply conducting routine consultations with parents in order to satisfy DfE requirements or tick a box for an Ofsted inspection; we believe it can be a powerfully effective tool to build up and sustain strong ties of trust, confidence and mutual collaboration between parents/carers and the school on some of the most sensitive issues around the personal and moral development of young people.
- The CES guidance expects that “pupils should hear a consistent message about the meaning and value of human sexuality at home, in the parish and at school. This can only be achieved if the home, parish and school work to integrate the teaching of RSE”. Fertile Heart is designed in such a way, so that parents, if they so choose, can talk through the material with their children at home either prior to or after sessions in the school. Clergy and catechists too will find the theological and spirituality content of some of the material equally valuable for their catechetical and pastoral ministry with young people.
- All of the above goes to strengthen and reinforce the truth that in the personal, moral, emotional, social and spiritual development of young people, we are all of us partners in a shared task. We must approach this without diluting any of the pre-eminence of the parent as the primary protector and educator.

## Co-ordinated

### The CES says that RSE must be;

1. taken seriously by school leaders;
  2. led properly by someone who has the time and expertise to co-ordinate the subject with dedication and commitment at a senior level;
- Senior leaders in Catholic schools and those to whom they entrust the provision of RSHE can be confident and reassured that Fertile Heart is a programme of study and reflection that enjoys the approbation of the Archbishop of Cardiff who has endorsed the programme for its rigour and detail.
  - We make no apologies for the level of intellectual demand which the material makes upon school leaders, teachers and pupils. As the CES guidance stipulates, RSE has to be “taught by those committed to doing it well; taught as part of a whole-school approach by those who are able to celebrate – not merely tolerate – the teaching of the Church on love and human sexuality.”
  - The subject matter of affective human sexuality in the light of Christian truth is not something that can be dealt with quickly or lightly. It ought to demand the very best of our time, energy and talents if we are going to be fruitfully immersed in the highest ideals of love and responsibility so that our young people can discern more wholesome ways of living amidst a culture that increasingly belittles authentic Christian love and commodifies sex.

## Balanced

Fertile Heart doesn't just promote Catholic virtues but if it is integrated within and alongside other areas of the curriculum, such as Religious Education, Science and Human Biology, schools can be confident that pupils are being offered a broad and balanced RSE programme which provides them with clear factual, scientific information when relevant and meets the statutory requirements placed upon them. Fertile Heart closely reflects the three core themes of the CES model curriculum:

### 1. Created and loved by God

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. FH takes pupils on a journey of self-understanding and discovery in the light of this eternal and transcendental truth in incremental stages.

### 2. Created to love others

We are created out of love and for love. The command to love is the basis of all Christian morality. FH aims to consistently inspire teachers and students together to continually aspire to think, believe and be the best person they can be knowing that all our positive choices and actions are part of the expression of Divine Love in the world.

### 3. Created to live in community

The whole purpose of cultivating a “fertile heart” within us, is so that we never forget nor neglect the truth and social spiritual reality that as human beings we are relational by nature and live in the wider community. FH teaches that through our exchange with others, our mutual service and through dialogue, each of us plays a unique role building up the Kingdom of God on earth for the good of individuals and the good of society. The material engages pupils to think about collective responsibility and stewardship.