



EMMANUEL SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

Relationships and sex education (RSE)



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Introduction

A foundation for relationships

Humans are made for relationships: with God and with each other. Indeed, at the heart of the Christian view of God is relationship. The Bible says that God is personal: one God in three Persons, and within God there are rich, personal relationships. As beings who are uniquely made in the image of God relationships are of central importance for us as well. When Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, his response affirmed the importance of relating well to – loving – both one’s Creator and one’s neighbour.¹ At the heart of the Christian Gospel lies the possibility of a restored relationship with God; alongside this comes an emphasis on positive, healthy relationships between human beings.

Building healthy relationships today

Our society is experiencing an ‘epidemic’ of loneliness. The sense of isolation that can arise in the modern world does not just impact the elderly however.² Such factors as rapid technological advance and the advent of online social networking present challenges to the relationships of the young. Living in a digital world can mean that an unprecedented connection to others goes hand-in-hand with a dissatisfaction with face-to-face relationships. As Sherry Turkle has written: ‘Tethered to technology, we are shaken when that world “unplugged” does not signify, does not satisfy...We build a following on Facebook or MySpace and wonder to what degree our followers are friends...suddenly, in the half-light of virtual community, we may feel utterly alone. As we distribute ourselves, we may abandon ourselves. Sometimes people experience no sense of having communicated after hours of connection...’³

Preparing for life in modern Britain

At Emmanuel Schools Foundation (“ESF”), we are committed to preparing our students for life in modern Britain.

Our country comprises people with diverse worldviews and identities – sexual, political, ethnic, cultural and religious – and widely varying practices and lifestyles. Our character education⁴ therefore equips students to understand different perspectives and to appreciate diversity. Students learn to respect and live peaceably with those who hold different, even mutually exclusive, views (such as members of the LGBT+ community, Jews, Muslims, humanists, social liberals and Christians). Our students learn to practise mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths, beliefs and lifestyles.

We want our young people to pursue truth, learning to think for themselves rather than to accept ideas without critique in order to pass an examination. Alongside ensuring our students stay safe we seek to guide them to think through the choices they face in the realm of their relationships. As our young people move towards adulthood we want them to grow in wisdom, having considered the differing perspectives about what is the best and the right way to live. We emphasise the importance of character⁵ and the need to take responsibility for others as well as ourselves. We are committed to the Bible as God’s Word, and believe that in it God reveals himself to us, as well as his plan for human relationships. We recognise that sensitivity is vital as controversial ethical issues are considered, and we look to the example of Jesus and his love and compassion for all.

¹ Matthew 22:37–40: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (New International Version)

² In a March 2017 *Relate* report, the authors note: ‘social isolation and loneliness is a widespread issue that affects people of all demographics, and can have damaging impacts on health and wellbeing. Younger people (16-35) were less likely to report having ‘good’ quality relationships, and more likely to state they feel lonely ‘often or all of the time’ than older respondents.’ https://www.relate.org.uk/sites/default/files/the_way_we_are_now_-_youre_not_alone.pdf (p.4)

³ *Alone Together* pp.11-12, Basic Books, 2001

⁴ Church of England (2015) *The Fruits of the Spirit: A Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education*. London: Church of England Education Office. https://churchofengland.org/media/2386307/fruits_of_the_spirit.pdf

⁵ Mark Pike (2017) *British values and virtues: schooling in Christianity and character?*, *British Journal of Religious Education* 39(3) (published online 3 Aug 2017).

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Relationships and sex education at ESF

In our relationships and sex education (RSE) we seek to help our students flourish in all their relationships (with friends and family; with adults and colleagues at ESF; with those they interact with less often; as they enter the world of work) and our core values sum up the essence of healthy relationships. We teach about sexual relationships in a way that is consistent with our Christian ethos: sex is a good gift of a good God who wants what is best for people he loves; sex is more than just a physical act, and involves the mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of our being; right and wrong exist; humans are moral beings who are responsible for the decisions they make; commitment is of vital importance and marriage is the right context for sexual relationships; all people are valuable; we need to take responsibility for others and treat them with respect. In British law marriage is between two consenting adults, but we recognise that many Christian churches understand the Bible to teach that marriage is the union of one man and one woman for life. As well as this being the position of the Church of England⁶ and the Roman Catholic Church, it is also the teaching of other faiths.

Delivery

Our relationships and sex education involves the science department: the national curriculum's science programme of study is followed at key stage 3 and the subject content from the GCSE in biology is taught at key stage 4.⁷ A trained team of teaching staff, who will discuss the ethical issues in discrete sessions across all year groups, will supplement the factual content taught in science. Many of the content will be delivered through the PTE department also through their Key Stage 3 and 4 curriculum. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from the sex education element of RSE, but not the national curriculum covered as part of science or PTE; they should make any request in writing to the Principal.

Aims and Principles

Five aims of our relationships and sex education

We aim to help our students to become:

1. **Knowledgeable** Students who have a sound knowledge of physiological and biological aspects of sex and reproduction
2. **Thoughtful** Students who reflect with maturity on the differing perspectives on relationships and sexual ethics
3. **Discerning** Students who are empowered to make wise choices in life relating to relationships, sex and sexuality
4. **Confident** Students who have an appreciation of their own self-worth and dignity and know where they can turn for help and advice
5. **Selfless** Students who put the interests of others before their own

⁶ <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/canons/section-b.aspx> Canons of the Church of England Section B: 30 *Of Holy Matrimony* 1. The Church of England affirms, according to our Lord's teaching, that marriage is in its nature a union permanent and lifelong, for better for worse, till death them do part, of one man with one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side...

⁷ National Curriculum in science: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-science-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-science-programmes-of-study#key-stage-3>; AQA Biology specification: <http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/biology/specifications/AQA-8461-SP-2016.PDF>

Five principles that we seek to uphold in all aspects of our programme of relationships and sex education

Our programme will be:

1. **Age appropriate** We seek to ensure that our delivery will be structured so as to protect children's innocence without compromise to clarity.⁸
2. **In partnership with parents/carers** We are privileged to have immense support from the parents of our students; indeed, the partnership that exists between ESF and home is one of the strongest features of ESF life. Our relationships and sex education will be significantly more effective as parents also spend time discussing the issues with their children. We encourage parents to teach their children about relationships and sex *before* they learn about it at school, or from any other source.
3. **Pastorally sensitive** We recognise that our students will have experienced a variety of home backgrounds and we are wholly committed to ensuring our support for parents as they seek to give their child the best possible start to life. We are fully aware also of the diversity of views on moral issues that exists in the modern world and our aim is to be entirely sensitive in areas where there is disagreement.
4. **Consistent with our ethos** We believe that the Bible outlines the best for human relationships and ESF is not required to promote views that are contrary to its ethos.⁹ But the Bible could not be clearer also about the value, worth and dignity of all, regardless of their views or their moral decisions; as such, we will treat all of our students with the same care and compassion.¹⁰ We also acknowledge that an exposure to different viewpoints is important as we seek to make up our mind.
5. **Well planned and expertly delivered** We seek to ensure that experts deliver our relationships and sex education, and we prize a delivery that communicates the facts that exist clearly; setting up straw men is counter-productive and refusing to acknowledge strengths in an opposing point of view or argument likewise.

⁸ In its March 2017 policy statement the Government expressed its commitment 'to ensuring that the education provided to pupils in Relationships Education and RSE is appropriate to the age of pupils and their religious background'.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595828/170301_Policy_statement_PSHEv2.pdf (p.4)

⁹ *Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils: supplementary information* Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools November 2014: 'It is not necessary for schools or individuals to 'promote' teachings, beliefs or opinions that conflict with their own, but nor is it acceptable for schools to promote discrimination against people or groups on the basis of their belief, opinion or background.'

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380396/Improving_the_spiritual__moral__social_and_cultural__SMSC__development_of_pupils_supplementary_information.pdf (paragraph 8, p.7)

¹⁰ See the ESF British Values Policy: <http://www.emmanuelsschoolsfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/British-Values-Policy.pdf>

Programme

Starting out...

In years 7 and 8 students consider what human beings are and the influences on us as we grow up, how to appreciate, establish and build healthy relationships in all areas of life, how we make decisions relating to the best and the right way to live, and they are introduced to adult relationships.

Year 7: science

In science students study the topic: **reproduction in animals**.¹¹ Students gain a knowledge of the biological mechanism of sexual reproduction in humans and the physical changes that take place during puberty. Curriculum subject matter includes: gametes and fertilisation; the structure and function of the male and female reproductive systems; the menstrual cycle (without details of hormones); gestation and birth, to include the effect of maternal lifestyle on the foetus through the placenta.

Year 7: RSE

In **RSE** students consider the following:

1. The nature of human beings: the nature and value of all human beings – whatever they choose to believe or however they choose to behave – as created in God’s image and therefore intrinsically precious; the importance of how we treat others (family/friends/acquaintances/colleagues/strangers); the importance of how we treat ourselves (including our minds & the way we think) and self-esteem.

2. Friendships: how to establish and grow healthy relationships with our friends.

3. Identity and image Identity: the factors that shape our identity: *what makes me who I am? Where do I find worth, value and security? How do I handle feeling insecure? How should I see myself?* Image: media representations of beauty and the difference between the images we are presented with – via the media/TV & film/online – and reality. The importance of self-respect and respect for others, and of taking responsibility for oneself as well as for others.

Year 7: online safety

The online safety curriculum¹² covers the following: password security; health and safety when using computers; an introduction to online reputation¹³; an introduction to cyberbullying; content selection and copyright.

¹¹ Science topics are taught in rotation: all year 7 students cover the *reproduction in animals* topic before the February half-term holiday.

¹² Alongside the content delivered in science and in relationships and sex education, an online safety curriculum is taught in key stages 3 and 4. In years 7 and 8 the teaching of online safety takes place during students’ business education lessons.

¹³ An ‘internet etiquette’ session is delivered to students in years 7-9 who have experienced issues in this area. Based on the *Thinkuknow* session **Your Digital Tattoo**, it aims to develop students’ understanding of the concept of ‘online reputation’ and the various possible consequences of sharing content online, and knowledge of ways to get unwanted content removed from the internet.

Year 8: RSE

In RSE students consider the following:

1. The importance of families and parents: the importance of appreciating/honouring your parents/carers; the possibility of rich family experiences in addition to those with your mother & father; the idea that *'it takes a village to raise a child'*: respecting & valuing grandparents and the elderly within your community; a visit to ESF schools by senior citizens from the local community.

2. An introduction to adult relationships: the beauty and challenge of **singleness**; the importance of commitment in **intimate relationships**; the seriousness of engaging in, and the benefits of delaying, sexual activity. Some key questions: *How do we decide what is right and wrong generally? Where do we look to for information on the facts and the moral choices we face? What does the law say about sexual intercourse?*

3. Sex and the way we speak as well as act Language: the importance of the way we speak about other people (when they are present and when they are absent); the casual use of sexualised terms; unacceptable homophobic comments; the zero tolerance approach towards bullying at ESF; the importance of boundaries; *What do we do if something is concerning us (personally or in relation to a friend)?*

Year 8: online safety

The online safety curriculum covers the following: digital literacy; online contact; cyberbullying and reporting; reliability of information.

Thinking further...

In years 9 and 10 students consider the issues relating to sexual relationships in greater depth; including, in science, the facts concerning sexually transmitted infections and contraception, and, in SRE, the issues relating to the nature of sex, when it is right to engage in sexual activity and how to live well in light of the pressures of the modern world.

Year 9: biology

In **biology** students study the topic: **infection and response**. *Context:* this topic introduces students to concepts relating to communicable disease; in doing so a variety of diseases are studied, such as measles, salmonella and malaria, alongside which sexually transmitted infections are considered. Curriculum subject matter includes: explaining how the spread of diseases can be reduced or prevented, including HIV and Gonorrhoea; explaining the use of antibiotics and other medicines in treating disease.

Year 9: RSE

In RSE students consider the following:

1. (What humans are and) what sex is: a good gift from a good God (cf. the notion that sex is a bad thing); dealing with misconceptions: sex is not as it is sometimes portrayed (including by Christians/the church at times). The right context for sex: *when is it good/right to have sex? What different views do people hold?* The traditional Christian view (including what the major churches say): singleness and celibacy, abstinence until marriage, lifelong marriage with sex for intimacy and procreation; other religious views on marriage; civil marriage; civil partnerships (since 2004) & civil marriage (since 2013); cohabitation; exclusive (non-cohabiting) relationships; sex outside of a committed relationship (with a stranger/paying for sex); sex alone; the issue of monogamy & polygamy. *What is the law in the UK about sexual activity and marriage?*

2. Purpose: *What is the purpose of sex? Can it ever be 'just sex'?* Sex is more than a physical act: it is a mental/emotional/spiritual act and, as such, always matters; it is about creating and maintaining a lifelong bond.¹⁴ Key issue: *What level of commitment should there be before I have sex with someone else?* Key question: *What are the benefits of delaying sex for a committed relationship?* The notion of delayed gratification and the benefits of delaying sex until a relationship of real commitment: it serves to *protect* us and to *provide* for us. The notion of marriage as a covenant in which two people give themselves to each other.

¹⁴ The Roman Catholic Church teaches that there must always be the possibility of new life after sexual intercourse; the majority Protestant view is that sexual intercourse is as concerned with intimacy as procreation.

3. Consent: the meaning of consent; the law on consent, the attitudes that exist in today's world; sexual abuse & exploitation; bullying, harassment & violence against women; forced marriage. Key questions: *How do we deal with unwanted physical contact (from people we know as well as strangers)? How do we deal with a situation in which someone is being pressured into engaging in sexual activity they do not want? What do we do if something is concerning us (personally or in relation to a friend)?*

Year 9: online safety

The online safety curriculum¹⁵ aims to develop students':

1. Speed friending: critical understanding of the nature of 'friending' online; skills and confidence in evaluating the reliability of online information, identifying concerning or risky online behaviour, and applying safety messages during interactions.

2. Things you see online: awareness of the impact of some kinds of online content on self-esteem and image, and sensitivity to the vulnerabilities of others; knowledge of sources of support for those upset by something they have seen online.

Year 10: biology

In **biology** students study the topic: **homeostasis**. *Context:* the human body responds to internal and external changes through the nervous system and endocrine system; the latter employs chemical messages called hormones; the production of specific hormones affects fertility. Applications of this knowledge include the role of hormones in fertility treatment and contraception. Students would be required to develop skill in evaluating associated personal and social implications, making decisions based on the evaluation of evidence and arguments. Curriculum subject matter includes: knowledge of fertility being controlled by a variety of hormonal and non-hormonal methods of contraception; descriptions of the roles of hormones in human reproduction, including the menstrual cycle; evaluating the different hormonal and non-hormonal methods of contraception; explaining the use of hormones in modern reproductive technologies to treat infertility (higher tier only).

Year 10: RSE

In **RSE** students consider the following:

1. Contraception: *what is it, what different methods are there & what different ideas exist about when it is right to use it?* Types of contraception: artificial contraception, emergency contraception, natural family planning or natural contraception; arguments about the use of contraception; the unexpected consequences of sexual activity, such as sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies, and avoiding the unwanted consequences (alcohol etc.)

2. Enjoying healthy relationships *In intimate relationships:* right expectations; trust; commitment; communication; clarity; friendship; depth; love; self-giving and sacrifice; time; compromise. *Peer & media pressure: are we always being told the truth or is there, at times, some kind of distortion? Is everyone having sex and am I missing out? Relationships with friends and in other relationships in adulthood:* with friends; at work; in the local community.

3. Sex and the way we think How to think about and respond to the sexualisation of society (& the increased sexualisation of children); the commodification of sex and the objectification of others: pornography¹⁶; online relationships: the internet, social media and respecting others and yourself; healthy and wise online relationships/interactions, and staying safe online.

¹⁵ In years 9 and 10 the teaching of online safety is delivered by a trained team in a series of discrete classroom sessions. The sessions utilise activities from Thinkuknow (www.thinkuknow.co.uk), an education programme from Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP), a command of the National Crime Agency.

¹⁶ A Childline survey (2015) of 2000 young people aged 11-17 found: 1 in 5 children aged 12-13 think that watching porn is normal behaviour; nearly 1 in 10 children aged 12-13 are worried they might be addicted to porn; around 1 in 5 of those surveyed said they'd seen pornographic images that had shocked or upset them; 12 percent admitted to making or being part of a sexually explicit video (<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/LLN-2015-0041>, p.4). An Institute for Public Policy Research survey (2014) of 18-year-olds on attitudes to sex and relationships found: 70% think pornography can have a damaging impact on young people's views of sex or relationships; 72% think pornography leads to unrealistic attitudes to sex and 70% think pornography encourages society to view women as sex objects (<http://www.ippr.org/files/publications/attachments/OP4391-IPPR-Data-Tables.pdf?noredirect=1>, pp.18, 27).

Year 10: online safety

The online safety curriculum aims to develop students':

- 1. Selfies exposed:** understanding of why someone might take a naked selfie, why it might get shared, and what impact and consequences this could have for them, in order to help them make mature and safe choices in future.
- 2. Private pics go public:** understanding of issues around sharing intimate pictures online, including trust, privacy, responsibility and the role of the media; knowledge of the law on sending and sharing sexual images.
- 3. When chat goes wrong:** ability to identify behaviour typical of sexual offenders on social media; understanding of the risks posed by talking to strangers online; knowledge of sources of help and support, and how to report abuse.