Caring friendships and Respectful Relationships

Human dignity, the ultimate worth of each person, is central to good education. The basic principle of respect for the value of each person involves continual discernment, deliberation and action, and schools are one of the main places where this happens, and where the understanding and practices it requires are learned. This includes vigilant safeguarding. It is especially important that the equal worth of those with and without special educational needs and disabilities is recognized in practice."
(Church of England Vision for Education 2016 p7)

Pupils are learning to be social beings and to develop different kinds of relationships, so of course they will make mistakes. All people are flawed and fallible, and it is our Christian duty to strive always to 'love your neighbour as yourself '.
Children and young people today are surrounded by examples of poor relationships: online, on television, in films, in the media.

In school they should see only adults who are positive role models, presenting courteous, respectful and caring relationships.
Teaching for respectful relationships begins with simple messages about sharing and kindness. When children fall out or hurt each other, things must be resolved. In the early years we stress the importance of telling an adult as the main approach to finding resolution. This option should always remain for all pupils, but, as pupils get older, we should introduce them to relationship management skills and strategies to resolve relationship problems. Such approaches contribute to the school's actions to prevent bullying but do not replace the school's responsibility to take all pupil concerns seriously and to investigate them.

Pupils should develop and manage healthy relationships, recognise and resolve problems, and reject unhealthy and harmful relationships. Pupils should also understand how to provide an appropriate response to challenging situations, for example in support of their peers.

There is an emphasises on teaching conflict resolution and restorative approaches. The curriculum must enable all pupils to understand, respect and celebrate difference and diversity. Learning about equality and inclusion is fundamental to teaching respect. Respect is based on acceptance of the equal value of every individual and cannot exist where one person or group believes they are superior to another. This relates to schools' duty to teach 'British Values'. Tolerance and acceptance is vital in a pluralist society and requires the skills of reconciliation and critical analysis.

"…What I mean by reconciliation, because in popular use what it usually means is everyone agrees with everyone, or everyone pretends they agree with everyone. And both of those are rubbish. Reconciliation means finding ways for people to disagree well. It means finding ways for people who disagree well to go forward together without reducing their beliefs to a lowest common denominator or pretending that their difference does not exist. It's honest, loving, faithful, committed disagreement." Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury.

We promote pupils' learning to be translated in to active compassion and citizenship.

Pupils will be delivering social activism and fulfilling the Christian thesis of St Theresa of Avila:
"Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world."

Online Relationships and Internet Safety and Harms

Children and young people today experience a fast moving and complex world, not seeing a divide between their on and off line lives. This presents positive opportunities but also challenges and risks. The RSE curriculum emphasises the importance of respectful online relationships which empower and support their own and others' mental wellbeing. This requires strength of character, a moral compass and confident decision making

The online safety and media elements of the RSE curriculum give scope for pupils to further develop an expansive range of character virtues including; decision making, honesty, moral courage, care, fairness and creative thinking.
"It is central to a Christian vision for education for 'life in all its fullness' and is concerned with developing virtues seeing them as 'character in action', grown through experience and demonstrated over time in word and deed."

(Leadership of Character Education, Church of England 2017 p6)

The online world enables pupils to reach out beyond the school gates and learn about different ways of life in the community and the wider world. We want to support children in this exploration. However, the internet can be a negative place where online abuse, trolling, harassment and bullying takes place, which has a detrimental impact on mental health. Valuing All God's Children highlights the particular vulnerability of LGBT children and young people and the need to recognise and protect them against homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying, including that carried out online.

Pupils need to build the skills to critically assess online content and develop the confidence to challenge and question what they see and read. It is important they develop critical awareness and informed thinking about relationships with both friends and people they have never met in the real world. Essential in this is that pupils know that online relationships can sometimes lead to grooming and exploitation. Pupils should know how to report adverse experiences and where to go for help.

Internet communities can distort reality, presenting extreme views, behaviours and experiences as the norm. Pupils should be able to recognise and resist pressure from peers and the media. The knowledge that everyone is made in God's image emphasises that everyone is unique and deserves respect.

Educating for life in all its fullness' must also encompass life online. The curriculum we provide will need to be informed by pupils' actual experiences and the risks they are exposed to.