Families and people who care for me

A key part of relationships education is helping pupils to understand the importance of the love, security and stability that families and people who care for them can give. It is important that children recognise the value of family commitment and support, including during times of difficulty and stress (though some pupils will not have experienced this). In Church of England schools we very much see both the school and the church as part of the child's extended family.

"The conviction that we are created and sustained by God for living together in families and communities is at the root of our dedication to educating for life together."

Families are diverse and it is the school's role to ensure that all families are represented and equally valued in the curriculum and across the whole school. From the early years, teaching about families must be inclusive and help children to understand that there are family and lifestyle differences; some families will look different from their own and we respect those differences. This does not in any way encourage the values of any one particular relationship.

The importance of family is central to the Christian story. Exploration of the qualities of good parenting and strong families is part of our character and values education. Selflessness, love, loyalty, support, listening, safeguarding, trust, forgiveness, healing, interdependence and independence, and the need to establish rules for shared living are just a few examples. Many of our pupils will be the parents of future generations and our education should ensure that they understand the importance of learning the skills and values involved in quality parenting and the wellbeing benefits of being part of a stable and supportive family unit.

The Christian understanding of marriage as a life choice based on love, trust, loyalty and fidelity is important to church schools. Marriage is a commitment, always entered into freely by both partners We must ensure teaching gives pupils the knowledge and understanding that marriage is a formal and legal commitment and is available to both opposite and same sex couples. The ceremony through which a couple get married may be religious or civil.

Our hope is that children will experience loving, stable and nurturing family relationships. Children need to be able to recognise if any relationship is making them feel unhappy or unsafe, and know how to seek help or advice from others. Family loyalty, fear of family break up, shame or guilt can all be powerful deterrents to speaking out.