

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION:

A CATHOLIC PERSPECTIVE



What is Respectful Relationships Education?

Respectful relationships education is the holistic approach to the school-based, primary prevention of gender-based violence. It uses the education system as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by engaging schools, as both education institutions and workplaces, to comprehensively address the drivers of gender-based violence and create a future free from violence. Our Watch, 2016.

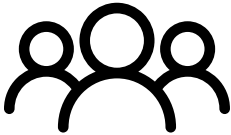


Core Principles from a Catholic Context

- **Human Dignity:** Rooted in Catholic teaching, each individual is created in the image of God, deserving respect and care.
- **Mutual Respect and Love:** Following the teachings of Christ, we are called to love one another, which includes respecting boundaries, recognising individual autonomy, and fostering equality in relationships.
- **Ethical Responsibility:** Catholic education promotes forming individuals with strong moral character, who act with integrity and responsibility in relationships.

The human person...is by nature open to relationship. Implanted deep within us is the call to transcend ourselves through an encounter with others.

Fratelli Tutti #111

Why is Respectful Relationships Education Important?

	Promotes Safe Communities and Cultures Helps to ensure that students feel safe, valued, and respected within the school community.
	Prevents Abuse and Violence By educating students early, we contribute to preventing behaviours like bullying, harassment, and violence.
	Supports Holistic Development Reflects Catholic teaching that education must foster the whole person – spiritually, morally, emotionally, and socially.

*‘Moral formation should always take place with active methods
and a dialogue that teaches through sensitivity and by using a language children can understand.
It should also take place inductively, so that children can learn for themselves
the importance of certain values, principles and norms,
rather than by imposing these as absolute and unquestionable truths.’*

Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* #264.

Connection to ACARA Version 9 Curriculum

The ACARA V9 HPE Curriculum embeds consent and respectful relationships education across learning areas educating students on healthy relationships, respectful interactions, and personal safety.

- **Prep to Year 2:**

- Students explore concepts like personal boundaries, emotions, and respectful communication. They practice basic strategies to seek or deny permission and learn about protective behaviors and help-seeking strategies to keep themselves safe.

- **Years 3 and 4:**

- Students expand on these ideas by discussing how emotional responses affect relationships and practicing consent in different situations. They also explore how personal choices can be influenced by health messages and societal expectations.

- **Years 5 and 6:**

- This stage focuses on the impact of gender stereotypes, inclusion, and diversity on relationships. Students practice strategies to manage emotions, seek permission, and communicate respectfully. There is a strong focus on applying protective behaviors in both online and offline contexts.

- **Years 7 and 8:**

- Students analyse how factors like power dynamics, gender roles, and empathy influence relationships. Consent is further explored, and students rehearse respectful communication strategies to handle relationships, and changes.

- **Years 9 and 10:**

- The curriculum emphasises critical thinking about relationships, gender equality, and violence prevention. Students are encouraged to evaluate how respect, power, and coercion affect relationships and explore strategies to manage complex emotional and social scenarios. Consent in sexual relationships is explicitly covered, alongside broader health, safety, and wellbeing strategies.

The ACARA V9 HPE curriculum aligns with respectful relationship education by encouraging students to develop personal, social, and ethical capabilities that support respectful and safe interactions throughout their schooling journey.

What is the role of Catholic Schools in delivering Respectful Relationships Education?

Values-Based Framework	Ground lessons on consent and respectful relationships with Catholic teachings on love, respect, and the dignity of the person.
Whole of School Approach	A whole-of-school approach is crucial to respectful relationships education because it ensures consistent behaviour expectations and management, fosters safe and inclusive cultures and communities, and reinforces unified messaging from all staff and community members, promoting a supportive environment for students to develop respectful, healthy relationships.
Staff Confidence & Capacity:	Investing in building staff confidence and capacity to teach respectful relationships is crucial as it equips educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively deliver the curriculum, model respectful behaviour, and address sensitive topics using a trauma-informed practice, ensuring a consistent and impactful learning experience for students.
Organisational Confidence	Organisational confidence is crucial because it enables schools to effectively address parent concerns, ensure the selection of high-quality, trustworthy resources that are evidence-based, and ensure that these resources align with Catholic perspectives, fostering trust and support from the school community while delivering a consistent and values-based respectful relationships education. Organisational confidence is also critical for the professional integrity of the teachers delivering the content.