



## some key messages

for parents to share with their children

- You are a special human being, created by God in his own image and likeness, gifted with unique talents and the potential to lead a life in relationship with God, with your family and with others.
- You are an important part of God's loving plan. God wants only the best for you. You are loved by God and God's plan is for you to love others as he loves you.
- God created you, body and soul. Therefore your body, with all its features - including your potential to grow and develop - is a unique creation and gift to the world. So you should care for your body, respect it and protect it from harm, because its uniqueness shows God's work in the world and through it you respond to his call to love.
- As you grow, your body will change and your feelings about your changing body might affect how you act towards others. Always remember that God wants only the best for everyone and he will guide you when you turn to him in prayer.
- God had a plan when he created male and female as different but complementary and each equally valued as being essential to God's loving plan.
- During your life you may experience various emotions and attraction towards others. As an adult you may be drawn to love one other person in an exclusive way and, as man and woman, you may decide to witness to your love before God and others through the Sacrament of Matrimony and so become husband and wife.
- In Matrimony a husband and wife express their love joyfully and give everything of themselves to the person they fully love and respect.
- It may be God's plan that in your marriage you are called to share in the creation of new life. The precious gift of children will enable you to realise God's loving plan in your new family.



## a guide for parents on relationships education in Catholic Primary schools

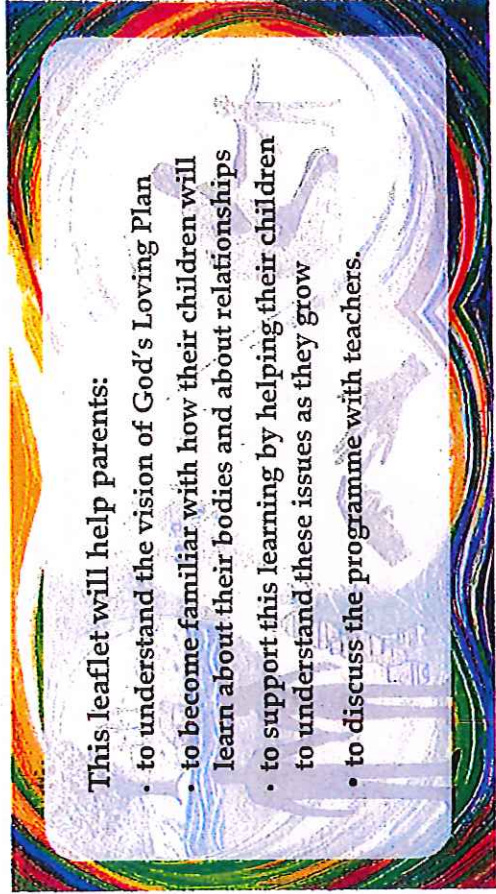
God's Loving Plan guides teachers on how children can be helped to develop healthy and respectful attitudes to their bodies and to all aspects of God's gift of life.

Parents are responsible for helping children to understand that their lives are precious and to know how to take care of the bodies which God has gifted to them as part of his plan for creating and sustaining life.

Parents and teachers can help children to wonder at the beauty of life, to aspire towards the joy of loving relationships and to find, ultimately in Marriage, the deepest expression of human love for one other person.

This leaflet will help parents:

- to understand the vision of God's Loving Plan
- to become familiar with how their children will learn about their bodies and about relationships
- to support this learning by helping their children to understand these issues as they grow
- to discuss the programme with teachers.







## the vision

Christians believe that all human life is precious as we are all made in God's image and likeness. We believe that God, who created us, loves us for who we are. He wishes us to appreciate our own worth and to live life as fully as possible, in and through love.

We believe that God has a loving plan for each of us - to help us to find love firstly as children, in close relationships with our family and with friends. From them we can learn the importance of tenderness, respect, self-giving, faithfulness and forgiveness.

As we grow into puberty, we seek friendships outside our families and we explore emotions and attractions in relationships with others. As adults, many of us go on to celebrate the Sacrament of Matrimony which blesses the exclusive and faithful love between husband and wife.

## a developmental approach

God's Loving Plan takes a sensitive and gradual approach to teaching children about some of the most personal and intimate features of life. It will help children to understand their bodies, including their sexual capacities, and to be at ease with themselves as their bodies grow.

It will show how Love can be at the heart of all aspects of their lives - physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual. It will teach them how to love themselves, to love others and to love God.

## family life

Teachers know that children today live in diverse types of family settings and do not assume any particular family circumstances as being the 'norm'.

While they will help pupils to understand the Christian vision of marriage, they will not offer moral judgements on anyone's particular family circumstances.



## what can parents do?

Take the lead in preparing your children for loving relationships. In fact, you have already done so by loving and caring for them when they were babies and took their first steps in the world. Since then you have taught them how to take care of themselves and how to relate to others in ways which are kind and loving.

From early years teach them to use the correct words to name the various parts of their bodies, as this will prevent misunderstanding or embarrassment later. This will help them to feel at ease when they learn about how their bodies are developing and about how life begins.

Talk to them about how they are changing as they grow; and explain that these physical and emotional changes are experienced by everyone, possibly in different ways and at different rates. (Some children may be taller; others may show signs of puberty earlier.)

Tell them repeatedly that God loves them for themselves; after all, He made them to be who they are.

Gradually teachers will help them to learn about how their bodies work and about how to take care of them. In the final years of Primary school, they will teach about how puberty is part of God's plan to prepare us all for being able to create new life in adulthood. Although this will involve providing information about body parts and their function in creating new life, all discussion will be set firmly in the context of how they can respond to God's plan for their lives.

While this can be an anxious time for parents, as you realise that the innocence of childhood is being left behind, you should reassure your children that these changes are a natural part of growing up.

Ask teachers about **WHAT** they will teach and **WHEN**.

