

**Colaiste Muire
Tuar Mhic Eadaigh
Co Maigh Eo**

**SPHE Policy
incorporating RSE**

Mission Statement

Coláiste Muire is a co-educational Voluntary Secondary School. The school is operated on the basis fundamental Christian principal; treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated. The school authorities and staff work to ensure a safe environment. We strive to encourage the holistic development of our students in an atmosphere that enhances both academic and personal growth.

Definition of SPHE

Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

School Ethos and S.P.H.E.

The SPHE Department in Coláiste Muire believes in the provision of a positive learning experience that nurtures mutual respect and personal responsibility within a safe, fair and caring environment. We are committed to the pursuit of excellence in all our activities.

Scope of this Plan

The plan will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning about all aspects of Social, Personal and Health Education. It will also apply to school staff, students, Board of Management, parents, visiting speakers and external facilitators.

Rationale

SPHE is a programme that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and others. It also allows them to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Circular 0037/2010 states that all second level schools are required to have a policy for SPHE/RSE. This policy should reflect the core values and ethos of the school. While elements of the programme cannot be omitted on the grounds of school ethos; spiritual, moral and ethical issues may arise when teaching RSE and the school's policy should guide teachers in the treatment of such issues, in accordance with the ethos of the school. The Circular also states that all schools are required to teach RSE as an integral component of Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) up to third year and as an RSE programme in Senior Cycle, even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class.

The school adopts and adheres to the DES Child Protection Procedures, Children First Legislation (2017) and has a Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment. This policy is cognisant of all aspects of our child protection duties. Where a concern is raised the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary School 2017 are adhered to.

The Aims of SPHE

Building on the aims of SPHE in primary school, at post-primary level SPHE aims to:

1. Enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
2. Promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
3. Enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making.
4. Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
5. Promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

We see these aims as contributing towards the school's commitment to foster personal growth and self-worth, as well as contributing to the creation of an environment that is positive, respectful, caring and just for all. The school recognises that the home is the natural environment for children to grow, develop and mature into adults. However, it also accepts as stated in paragraph 9 sub section (d) of the Education Act 1998, its own role in

supporting parents in this work and in fostering the social, moral, spiritual and personal development of the students. SPHE supports the fulfilment of this vital role.

Objectives:

Social Personal and Health Education should enable the students to:

- Identify and name feelings. Distinguish between feeling and actions
- Develop a framework for making informed and healthy choices and decisions
- Develop an awareness that decisions and actions have consequences
- Listen to and respect different opinions
- Understand the difference between passive, aggressive and assertive behaviour
- Become competent and confident in their ability to show respectful and assertive behaviour

SPHE Plan - Context and Rational

Our SPHE programme deals with contemporary issues and topics at an age-appropriate level. The Social, Personal and Health Education offered to our young people is intrinsically as valuable as all other curricula offered in our school. It gives each student an opportunity to develop the skills and competencies needed to take care of themselves and others in order to flourish as young adults going into the wider community. A student who has a high degree of self-worth and a sense of security will be more predisposed to school life and to the variety of learning situations it offers.

The school acknowledges that their parents have primary responsibility for children's personal development. However, it also accepts, as outlined in the 1998 Education Act, its role in supporting parents in this work. ~Section 4 of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools requires schools to have an agreed policy for RSE and a suitable RSE programme in place for all students at both Junior and Senior Cycle.

The plan is also developed in the context of the DES circulars 0023/2010, 0037/2010 and the Education Act (1998) Section 9 (e) which specifies that:

‘Schools have a responsibility to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and promote health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school’

Further to this, Circular 15/2017 ‘Arrangements for the Implementation of the Framework for

Junior Cycle. The philosophy of the plan also draws on the NEPS document “Wellbeing in Post Primary Schools” and the Department of Education and Skills ‘Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines’.

The school adopts and adheres to the DES Child Protection Procedures, Children First Legislation

(2017) and has a Child Protection Policy/Child Safeguarding Statement, with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principals as the Deputy DLPs. The RSE Policy is conscious of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy/Child Safeguarding Statement.

This Plan is informed by:

- The Child Protection Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- The School Positive Behaviour Code
- The Special Needs Policy
- Coláiste Muire Mission Statement
- Children First 2017

Every class offer opportunities for enhancing the personal and social development of the students.

The culture of the school endorses behaviours where,

- People feel valued,
- Self-esteem is fostered
- Respect, tolerance and fairness are evident
- High expectations and standards are promoted
- Open communication is the norm
- Effort is recognised and rewarded
- Uniqueness and difference are valued
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted

Practical issues in relation to SPHE

The SPHE Department in 2018 decided to adopt the textbooks in the Healthy Living series for the Junior Cycle Curriculum. These textbooks were introduced into the Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum and used for 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year students.

In the SPHE & Folláine classes, students will participate in mindfulness walks, meditation sessions, restorative circles and will watch some documentaries for example 'Raised by the Village' on the RTE Player.

Relationship and Sexuality Plan & Policy

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

RSE is a developmental process through experiential learning with which students participate to help cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social Personal and Health Education

The guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) state that the social personal and health education is "spiritual, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodologies". The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas which would be pertinent to the development of a healthy attitude to sexuality in oneself and one's relationship with others. SPHE deals with many issues such as, self-esteem, assertiveness, communication and decision-making skills, all of which can contribute to the effectiveness of the RSE Programme.

Aim of Relationship and Sexuality Education programme

Relationships and sexuality education which is in the overall framework of Social Personal and Health Education, has its specific aims:

- a) To help students to understand and develop friendships and relationships
- b) To promote an understanding of sexuality

- c) To support a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- d) To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction
- e) To enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school
- f) To provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way

It is acknowledged that in a course of limited duration, these aims are aspirational

Guidelines for the management and organization of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our School.

1. Teaching the programme

Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the principal.

2. Informing and involving parents

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education concerning relationships and sexuality is seen by the school as very important. Relevant sections of the policy will be communicated to the parents at the relevant time. For senior cycle a link to HSE Booklets given to all students will be made available on the school's website.

3. Offering Advice

The school function is to provide a general education about sexual matters and issues and not to offer individual advice, information or counselling on aspects of sexual behaviour and contraception – however sources of professional information and advice will be identified when appropriate. Teachers may provide students with information about where and from whom they can receive sexual advice and treatment, e.g. Their doctor or other suitable agency. Information should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the student.

4. Contraception

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way. At senior cycle students will be given a copy of a HSE Booklet in class to assist with the lesson. Students may take this home if they wish.

5. Abortion

This topic will be dealt with in an age appropriate, open manner, looking at all sides of the issues in a non-directive way.

6. Sexually Transmitted Infections

Given that the rate of STI transmission is increasing, it is important that the subject is addressed in the School. While the awareness of STIs is one of the objectives of the Third Year SPHE/RSE syllabus, STIs are mainly addressed in Senior Cycle. At senior cycle students will be given a copy of a HSE booklet in class to assist with the lesson. Students may take this home if they wish.

7. Special Needs

Students with Special Needs: Students who have additional educational needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up. They may also need more help in learning what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable, and in being warned and prepared against abuse by others. The SEN teacher liaises with the wellbeing teacher to stay informed on topics being completed and discussed.

Sensitive Issues

Class discussions will be of a general nature, and will not be personally focused.

Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. The SPHE teacher may exercise his or her own judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after

the class has finished. This will be done in harmony with the ethos of the school. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the

Guidance Counsellor, the Principal or the Deputy Principal

Participation

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module of the programme. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some or all of the RSE classes but parents are then encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice if such a situation was to arise. However, it will be necessary for the parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school principal for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE, the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents wishing to withdraw

their child from RSE must inform the principal of their decision in writing during the first month of the new academic year, otherwise the student will participate in the RSE classes commencement

Withdrawing students from the RSE programme

The Education Act (1998: section 30, subsection (2)(e) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the consent of the parent or in the case of a student who has reached the age of eighteen years; The students' parents have a right therefore to withdraw their son/daughter from all or any aspect of RSE. Parents must notify the Principal in advance of their wish to have their child withdrawn from all or part of the programme. The school will ask the parent to put their request in writing.

Confidentiality

It is our school policy that in circumstances where a student is considered at some risk of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect) or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the DLP, or the DDLP. The DLP or the DDLP will decide whether to inform the parents and will inform the appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling. Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality.

Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the DLP and possibly to parents the DLP decides that it is in the best interests of the student to notify parents.

Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information.

Teachers must indicate clearly to students when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the student can then decide whether to proceed or not.

Implementation

The Board of Management has assigned the role of coordinating the implementation of this plan to the Principal and the SPHE coordinator.

SPHE Coordinator

SPHE and Wellbeing Team

Teaching Methodologies used

As the SPHE programme is primarily skills-based, teaching methods are of an experiential

nature with an emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching

methods are child centred and are appropriate to the age and educational needs of the student.

The class atmosphere is one of respect for the privacy of each student and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. SPHE is timetabled for one 40 minute class per week for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year.

The Team meet and communicate regularly, through face-to-face meetings, emails and Teams App. This is a very valuable support network, where planning, organizing and dealing with issues are undertaken.

Staff Development and Training

The Board of Management provides the necessary resources to support the SPHE programme on a continuous basis. School management encourages and facilitates teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of the SPHE programme. SPHE teachers have an understanding of, and a familiarity with, the methodologies associated with education in this area. Teaching methods are discussed at the subject meetings and the preferred teaching methods used are up to the individual teacher.

Cross-curricular links

SPHE has links with many other subjects such as Home Economics, P.E, Religion, Guidance Counselling, English and Science.

Parental Involvement in SPHE

Parents are informed about the content of SPHE during our Open Evening. Parents are invited, by appointment to meet with SPHE teachers throughout the school year. Also, parents can meet with SPHE teachers at parent-teacher meetings.

Dissemination of Information to Staff

This SPHE plan outlining subject procedures is available to all staff.

Student Assessment and Homework

An Assessment for Learning approach is used in each lesson through group work, pair work, the use of case studies and peer assessment. Students use enquiry and self- reflection skills regularly. Students are assessed based on their completion of projects as well as their participation in class discussion and group work. Homework is only assigned when a project is being completed and the student must do research at home.

Review and Evaluation

The SPHE programme is reviewed and evaluated on a continuous basis by the SPHE team at subject meetings throughout the year. The opinion and voice of the students will be considered during reviews and evaluations.