

**St. Patrick's National School,  
Glencullen,  
Dublin 18.**



**Green-Schools 2954255**

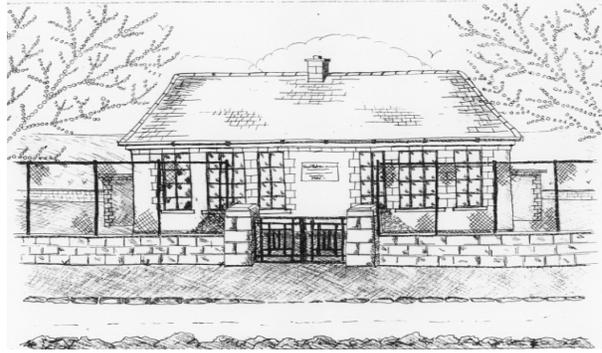
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# **SPHE Policy**

## **Introduction**

The staff of St Patrick's NS, formulated this school policy for SPHE, in consultation with our Board of Management and our parents. We believe that SPHE is a shared responsibility and that everyone needs to contribute, so as to ensure an effective implementation of the SPHE programme in our school. The policy was drafted in 2016, and brought to the attention of the Board of Management and parents for approval and ratification. The policy was reviewed in 2018 and will be reviewed again in 2022.

## **Rationale**

Aspects of SPHE have been taught in our school for many years through various programmes and initiatives such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall, Weaving Wellbeing, Relationships and Sexuality Education. It has also been taught through integration with other subject areas such as Learn Together, Physical Education, Geography, etc. This policy outlines our formal approach to the teaching of SPHE and planning for SPHE on a whole school basis in compliance with D.E.S. guidelines.

## **Our Vision**

Our school believes that the social, personal and health needs and the wellbeing of each and every member of the school community is important and that education flourishes in an

environment where good relationships are encouraged. We strive to promote a sense of belonging, which is nurtured in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance and supported by a positive democratic environment of discussion, listening, reflection and review. We are happy to embrace the SPHE programme as a means of promoting and sustaining this vision for our children and our community.

## Aims

The aims of social, personal and health education are

- To promote the personal well-being of the child
- To foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being
- To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all aspects of their lives
- To develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life
- To enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the independent nature of the world.

## Broad Objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the SPHE curriculum should enable the child to

- be self confident and have a positive sense of self-esteem
- develop a sense of personal responsibility and come to understand her/his sexuality and the processes of growth, development and reproduction
- develop and enhance the social skills of communication, co-operation and conflict resolution • create and maintain supportive relationships both now and in the future
- develop an understanding of healthy living, an ability to implement healthy behaviour and a willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health
- develop a sense of safety and an ability to protect himself/herself from danger and abuse • make decisions, solve problems and take appropriate actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- become aware and discerning about the various influences on choices and decisions
- begin to identify, review and evaluate the values and attitudes that are held by individuals and society and to recognise that these affect thoughts and actions
- respect the environment and develop a sense of responsibility for its long term care
- develop some of the skills and abilities necessary for participating fully in groups and in society
- become aware of some of the individual and community rights and responsibilities that come from living in a democracy
- begin to understand the concepts of personal, local, national, European and global identity

- appreciate and respect the diversity that exists in society and the positive contributions of various cultural, religious and social groups
- promote the values of a just and caring society in an age appropriate manner and understand the importance of seeking truth and peace. (Ref: SPHE Primary Curriculum)

## Content

Because SPHE permeates all aspects of school life, the content outlined in the curriculum is implemented by a combination of formal and informal approaches.

The content of the SPHE programme is presented formally under the following curricular Strands and Strand Units through engagement with the programs and resources listed below:

### **Strands: Strand Units:**

- *Myself, Self identity*

*Taking care of my body  
Growing and changing  
Safety and protection  
Making decisions*

- *Myself and others Myself and my family*

*My friends and other people  
Relating to others*

- *Myself and the wider world. Developing citizenship*

*Media education*

### **Programmes and Resources:**

Including but are not limited to:

- *Relationship and Sexuality Education programme is taught at all levels*
- *Walk Tall Programme is taught at all levels*
- *Stay Safe Programme is taught at the following levels: Senior Infants, second, fourth and sixth classes*
- *SPHE primary school curriculum and teacher guidelines*
- *RSE guidelines and resources for students with mild general learning disabilities*
- *Stay safe guidelines for children with learning difficulties*
- *Busy Bodies Programme (fourth, fifth and sixth class)*
- *Weaving Wellbeing Program*
- *Wellbeing in Primary Schools, Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion*

### **Sequence of teaching**

- Term 1- Weaving Wellbeing/ Walk Tall
- Term 2- Stay Safe
- Term 3 - RSE

## Contexts for SPHE:

SPHE will be taught in our school through a combination of the following three contexts:

### 1. Positive School Climate and Atmosphere

St Patrick's NS works to create a positive atmosphere by:

- o building effective communication
- o catering for individual needs
- o creating a health-promoting physical environment
- o developing democratic processes
- o enhancing self-esteem
- o fostering respect for diversity
- o fostering inclusive and respectful language
- o teaching the programmes within the context of our school ethos
- o developing appropriate communication
- o developing a school approach to assessment

### 2. Discrete time for SPHE

SPHE is allocated ½ hour per week on each teacher's timetable in St Patrick's NS. Teachers may manipulate this time at their own discretion to cater for the needs of individual classes.

### 3. Integration

Integration with other subject areas and Linkage within SPHE will be developed throughout this programme. Teachers will endeavour to adopt a thematic approach to SPHE by integrating it with other subject areas such as Learn Together Ethical Education (most SPHE curricular areas), Language (Media Education), Science (Living Things), Geography (Citizenship), History (Myself and my Family), Visual Arts, Physical Education (Water Safety), etc. Themes/Projects such as Healthy Eating Week, Friendship Week, International Day, etc. will also be explored. Some themes will be explored by the Junior, Senior or whole school community through Assemblies.

## Approaches and Methodologies:

The approaches and methodologies used in SPHE are crucial to the effectiveness of the programme. Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE, therefore we endeavour to teach SPHE using a variety of strategies which include:

Drama activities, co-operative games, pictures photographs and visual images, pair, group and whole class discussion, written activities, the media and information and communication technologies, looking at children's work, circle time, guided reflective time, problem solving, decision making, engaging in dialogue and debate, assembly presentation etc. The plan also provides for cross-curricular learning experiences particularly in relation to Ethical Education

Confidentiality: While confidentiality within discussion groups will be encouraged, children should be informed there may be circumstances relating to child safety and protection in which some information may have to be passed on at the discretion or best judgment teacher to the appropriate person e.g. Principal/DLP, parents/guardians

## **Assessment**

We use the following recommended informal tools for assessment in SPHE:

- o Teacher observation
- o Student Self-Assessment
- o Programme tasks, home-school sheets and worksheets
- o Teacher-designed tasks and worksheets
- o Portfolios, scrapbooks and projects
- o Regular reviews of class and whole school procedures, planning, goals and resources

## **Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN):**

Teachers will endeavor to adapt and modify activities and methodologies in SPHE to encourage participation by children with SEN. In certain instances it may be deemed appropriate to cover some topics and associated terminology in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) with children with SEN that are not generally covered at class level. The learning support and resource teachers will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary. We will liaise with departmental support, trained professionals/appropriate agencies, where appropriate and in addition to the normal care when dealing with sensitive issues such as bereavement/separation/health or family issues to ensure that the children with SEN are fully supported. Recognising their primary role, parents are encouraged to mediate the information on certain topics with their own child.

## **Equality of Participation and Access:**

We recognise and value diversity, and believe all children are entitled to access the services, facilities, or amenities that are available in the school environment. St Patrick's NS is under the patronage of the Catholic Church. Our ethos is based on inclusivity and this is central to our SPHE programme. We endeavour to ensure that all children will be given appropriate support to allow equality of access and participation in the SPHE programme. Access is facilitated by initiatives such as the Buddy system, splitting or mixing groups where appropriate, class based or whole school approaches and provision for wellbeing, yoga, mindfulness and meditation and social skills education, modelling and development. Students are included in the democratic process through developing class charters, activities and groups such as the Student Council and Green Schools committees, promoting active citizenship and consultation with families on policy review.

Parental participation and discussion with the children is encourage through home-school links, values of the month etc. and is viewed as extremely positive and of great importance. Parents are encouraged to share their cultural identity, interests and expertise through activities such as class visits, presentations, participation in assembly, attending on trips or classroom activities (games, cooking, gardening, yoga, IT, crafts, drama, music etc.) in consultation with the class teacher.

## **Statements**

Our plan takes into account the range of differences in the school so that all children will be given the opportunity to obtain maximum benefit from the programme. Discreet time is used to deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. This discrete time will be organised in blocked periods where appropriate.

## **School/ Home/ Community Links**

- Parental involvement is encouraged and promoted within the school and is outlined in our policy document *Parental Involvement*.
- Information evenings for parents/guardians held throughout the year.
- Parent/teacher meetings.
- Information on the Stay Safe and RSE programmes is provided prior to and/or during the teaching of the programmes.
- Busy Body books given to parents prior to lessons being taught.
  
- The involvement of the wider community is encouraged, e.g. visits from the local garda community liaison officer.

## **School Policies and Programmes Supporting SPHE**

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy Statement
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Critical Incident Policy
- Ethical Curriculum Policy
- Garda Vetting Policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- IT Policy
- Mobile phone Policy
- Parental Involvement Policy

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- RSE Policy
- RSE Programme
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Stay Safe Programme
- Substance Use and Abuse Policy
- Walk Tall Programme
- Working Together Policy

## **Homework:**

Homework in this subject will usually be informal and discussion based. The home-link in SPHE is very important and reinforcement by way of discussion is encouraged with parents/guardians. Homework will reflect the active learning approach and will reinforce information already taught or discussed during class.

## **Individual/Whole School Planning and Reporting:**

This policy, the SPHE school plan and the curriculum documents will inform and guide teachers in their long and short term planning in SPHE. The policy and the school plan also include a whole school working planning document which divides the subject areas of SPHE across the year on an annual or biennial basis.

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The working plan recognises that teachers may still apply flexibility and discretion in the choice of topic and timing to respond to the particular needs of their own class group and to external events and criteria. By its nature this plan is subject to annual review and revision and will reflect the needs and resources of the school at any given time. As such it is not appended to this policy but is available for view if requested. Moreover, each teacher will keep a record of topics covered in their Cúntas Míósúil, which will be available to inform progress and needs when evaluating and reviewing our whole school working plan and general progress in SPHE.

## **Staff Development:**

We fully encourage and will facilitate continuous staff training in the following areas:

- *Child Abuse Prevention Programme/ Stay Safe*
- *Substance Misuse programme /Walk Tall*
- *Relationships and Sexuality Education programme /R.S.E.*
- *Child Protection training for Principal and Deputy Principal*

Teachers are encouraged to attend these and any other SPHE related courses and will share information/skills acquired at these courses with other members of staff during staff meetings/teach meet opportunities.

## **Parental Involvement:**

Parental involvement is considered an integral part to effectively implementing SPHE as we believe that SPHE is a shared responsibility. This plan and the curriculum documents are available for parents to inform them of the programme for SPHE. Many of the programme materials are also now available online

## **Community Links:**

The local community has a very important role to play in supporting the programme in SPHE and we endeavour to liaise with members of the community such as new parents, Dental Hygienist, Health Nurse, Fireman, Garda, Vet, Bicycle Safety Training, Sports clubs, qualified practitioners of yoga, mindfulness and meditation, Internet Safety Specialists, Anti-bullying Initiatives etc.

## **Success Criteria:**

The success of this plan will be evaluated through teacher's preparation, continuous professional development, planning and assessment. There will also be an evaluation of whether the content, lessons and procedures outlined in this plan and the resources listed therein have been practical and successfully followed. Success will also be measured by the children having been enabled to achieve the aims outlined in this plan. This will entail evaluating whether the pupils:

- have increased knowledge, understanding and skills,
- are more aware of their attitudes and values
- are more respectful of themselves and others,
- relate to others in a positive way
- are more actively involved in the school and possibly local community
- from feedback from parents and pupils themselves
- a happy, inclusive, tolerant, respectful and generous atmosphere in school

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

We believe that the whole school community must be involved to successfully implement SPHE. Therefore the teaching staff will implement this plan with the support of the Patron, the Board of Management, parents/guardians and the local community.

Each teacher is responsible for the implementation of the SPHE policy with his/her own class. However it is recognized that individual teachers have a right to opt out of, or look for support in teaching some parts of the RSE programme. In this case alternative arrangements will be made to ensure that the programme is taught to all classes and all groups within a class.

Parents may request to withdraw children from aspects of the RSE programme (Role of

Parents, RSE Policy). However, a decision to withdraw may only be taken after a consultation meeting with the class teacher. If a parent wishes to withdraw a child from the sensitive lessons this decision should be given in writing stating their reasons for doing so and this will be centrally filed. Every effort will be made to withdraw the child and he/she will be sent to another classroom for the duration of the lesson. If a child has been withdrawn from sensitive RSE lessons, the school takes no responsibility for what the child may hear following the teaching of the lessons, eg. what they might hear on yard. **Note:** The Department of Education does not allow children to absent themselves from school while RSE is being taught.

## **Role of Visitors:**

Visitors to SPHE classes will deal with discussions in line with the aims of the programme and the Ethos of the school. It is the duty of the teacher who organises the visit to ensure the suitability of the visit to the programme and the school. Teachers will remain with the class for the duration of the visit. Principal must be informed in advance of all visiting speakers and the content of their presentation. Visitors who deliver a program to the children of more than one session, or in a more formal capacity must comply with the Garda Vetting Policy and the Parental Involvement Policy of the school

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## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed regularly according to the ongoing schedule of review of school policies. The whole staff is responsible for co-ordinating this review at school level and such reviews will happen frequently. A more comprehensive review will happen periodically and may include: *Teachers, Pupils, Parents, Post holders, BoM, DES Cigiri.*

## **Ratification**

Signed: John Farrell  
**Chairperson of Board of Management**

Signed: Ed Bourke  
**Principal**

Date:

Date: