



Educate
Together



SPHE & RSE (ETSS Wicklow)

School Address: The Glebe, Wicklow Town

Roll number: 68345R

School Patron/s: Educate Together

Introduction:

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with the Board of Management, Staff and Student Council.

Description:

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a subject which provides students with the opportunity to develop a sense of personal identity, self-esteem and the ability to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Aims:

1. To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities
2. To promote self-esteem and self confidence
3. To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision making
4. To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
5. To promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing
6. To enable students to participate as active and responsible adults in the personal and social dimensions of society
7. To encourage students to make responsible decisions that respect their own dignity and the dignity of others

School Ethos:

SPHE contributes to the overall ethos at ETSS Wicklow by promoting the diversity of our school. SPHE provides a unique opportunity where students can develop the skills and competences to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their overall health and wellbeing. SPHE also provides the context within which students can learn about the important moral, physical, social and emotional issues around relationships and sex and sexuality, including where to get reliable information from trusted sources.

Junior Cycle Wellbeing:

SPHE is now part of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme. SPHE provides opportunities for teaching and learning which are directly related to health and wellbeing. Through the use of experiential methodologies, including group work and class discussions, SPHE aims to develop students' positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It also aims to build the student's capacity to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Through studying aspects of SPHE, students have time to focus on developing personal and social skills including self-management, communication, coping and problem-solving.

Class Organisation and Timetabling:

In line with *Circular M11/03*, junior cycle classes are timetabled for one hour class of SPHE per week:

"All second level schools must timetable Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as part of the Junior Cycle Core Curriculum from September 2003. The time allocation recommended is the equivalent of one class period per week".

In line with Circular 0037/2010, all Senior Cycle classes will receive an RSE programme:

"All second level schools must implement Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as an element of SPHE at Junior Cycle and as an RSE programme in Senior Cycle, even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class."

In line with Students *Circular 0079/2018*, students receive SPHE classes in their dedicated class tutor groups.

"The new area of learning entitled Wellbeing was introduced for First Years from September 2017. A key component of this area of learning is Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Students receive SPHE classes in their dedicated class tutor groups. All Junior Cycle classes, 1st, 2nd and 3rd year, are timetabled one class of SPHE per week."

All SPHE teachers where possible will have the SPHE class for another subject due to the importance of the teacher-student relationship.

Students with Special Educational Needs:

For learning activities to be meaningful, relevant and achievable for all students, it is important that teachers find ways to respond to student diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies. The following strategies are used at ETSS Wicklow:

- Ensuring that the objectives are realistic for students and ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- Providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups
- Spending more time on tasks and organising the learning tasks into small stages
- Ensuring that language is pitched at the students' level of understanding and does not hinder understanding of the activity
- Using task analysis, outline the steps to be learned/completed in any given task
- Posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes and to assist in self direction and correction
- Using graphic symbols as reminders to assist students in understanding the sequence/steps in any given task/problem
- Modelling task analysis by talking through the steps of a task as it is being done
- Having short and varied tasks
- Creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible, everyday materials
- Displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures

Content and Teaching Methodologies

Through participation in the SPHE Programme, students encounter a wide range of issues through a variety of experiences. These issues will be addressed through a number of different areas of learning. The emphasis will be on building skills, understanding, attitudes and values important in all these areas.

Several topics will be discussed in Junior Cycle SPHE, such as:

- Belonging and integrating
- Self-Management
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendship
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

Several topics will be discussed throughout Senior Cycle SPHE, such as:

- Mental health
- Gender studies
- Substance use
- Relationships and sexuality education
- Physical activity and nutrition

SPHE is primarily skills based and therefore teaching methods are of an experiential nature with the emphasis on discussion, reflection, and classroom participation. These teaching methods are student centred and appropriate to the age and development of the student. The class atmosphere is one of respect, sensitivity and care.

Teaching methodologies may include:

- Group Work
- Roleplay
- Brainstorming
- Icebreakers
- Simulation
- Narrative expression
- Debating
- Project work
- Art work
- Multi-media materials
- Case studies
- Visiting speakers

The Department of Education recognises that each school has flexibility to plan the SPHE Programme in harmony with the students' needs and schools' resources. ETSS Wicklow recognises that the primary responsibility for the moral, social and personal development of the children lie with their parents/guardians.

Cross Curricular Links:

The following subject areas form the cross curricular links with the SPHE Programme:

- Visual Art
- Artistic Performance
- Physical Education
- Wellbeing
- Science
- CSPE
- Home Economics
- Ethical Education

Resources:

- DES Syllabus and Guidelines
- My Life textbook
- Healthy Living/Healthy Times/Healthy Choices workbooks
- Webwise Resource books
- Growing up LGBT+
- Body Whys
- Belong to Stand Up
- Mental Health Matters

Staff Development and Subject Development:

An SPHE Coordinator discusses training needs for SPHE teachers with school management as part of a policy of developing a core of trained SPHE teachers in the school.

It is the aim that all SPHE teachers undertake the in-service training programmes '**Introduction to SPHE**' and '**Junior Cycle RSE**' in-service training.

Relationships & Sexuality Education (RSE):

The objective of RSE is to help students cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others in the area of relationships and sexuality.

The Draft Guidelines for RSE state that Social Personal and Health Education is "*spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology*". The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. Apart from the specific lessons of RSE, SPHE covers other areas 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.

Aims of RSE Programme:

- To help students understand and develop friendships and relationships
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and one's relationship with others
- To promote knowledge of and respect of reproduction
- To enable students to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school
- 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

Consent:

SPHE and RSE at Junior Cycle is a core curricular subject. The school will strive to keep parents/guardians up to date with the contents of the SPHE & RSE programme. The school will respect the choice of parents/guardians that their child(ren) opt out of RSE. Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and the school recognises the importance of the role of parents/guardians in the education of their children concerning relationships and sexuality. Parents/guardians are asked for their consent for their child(ren) to participate in the RSE programme at the school. An email/letter will be sent to parents/guardians prior to the RSE module to inform them that the course will take place over the coming weeks.

It will be necessary for parents/guardians opting out of RSE to meet with school management to discuss their decision and to make suitable arrangements for alternative studies during this time. Where students are withdrawn for RSE, the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students.

Explicit Questions:

It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

Confidentiality:

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of SPHE class, the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

- Child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect)
- Intention to harm self or others
- Substance misuse

Any disclosure will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in compliance with the Child Protection Procedures 2017.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 5.2.2, 5.2.3 and 5.2.4:

- 5.2.2. Where a registered teacher received an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused or neglected, is being abused or neglected, or is at risk of abuse or neglect he or she shall, without delay, report the matter to the DLP.
- 5.2.3. Firstly, the DLP and the registered teacher must consider whether there are reasonable grounds for concern about the welfare and protection of the child.
- 5.2.4. If the DLP and the registered teacher both agree that there are reasonable grounds for concern they shall then jointly consider whether the concern in question is at or above the defined threshold of harm at which a report must be submitted as a mandated report to Tusla.

It is also school policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at risk of any type of abuse or breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the principal. The principal will decide whether to inform the parents/guardians and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also school policy:

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality
- Pupils must be made aware that the school may contact parents/guardians if it is decided that this is in the best interests of the student
- Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information
- Teachers must indicate clearly to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not

SPHE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the start of the year and remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible before they make a disclosure.

Referral:

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional duty to impart the SPHE course content, the needs of the students will be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student. SPHE teachers, when in doubt as to the correct course of action, are encouraged to discuss the issue with the Guidance Counsellor or the principal without identifying the student.

Visitors:

Circular 0043/2018

National and international research has consistently shown that qualified classroom teachers are best placed to work sensitively and consistently with students and can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education. Research findings indicate that the following teaching approaches have limited effect and are counterproductive to the effective implementation of SPHE:

- Scare tactics and sensationalist interventions
- Testimonials
- Information only interventions
- Short term/once off interventions

However, visitors can enhance the quality of subject provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned programme of RSE. Teachers inviting speakers must:

- Inform the principal in advance
- Make the speaker aware of the ethos and SPHE policy of the school
- Agree the content of the presentation
- Do preparatory and follow up work where possible
- Remain with the class during the visit

Information:

The school's 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 pupils with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agency. Any advice offered will not be directive and will be appropriate to the age of the student.

Publication of the SPHE & RSE Policy:

This policy will be available on the school website and upon request at the school.

Whole School Support for SPHE:

While specific teachers are trained and hold the responsibility for delivering the programme, all teachers support the work of SPHE by promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging responsible and mature decision making. There is generally a whole school approach to key areas of SPHE and the school year has times earmarked when certain topics or issues are highlighted e.g. Kindness Week, Healthy Eating Week and Diversity Week.

Review and Evaluation:

The SPHE course is never static and must be examined and evaluated regularly and adapted to the needs of the students. The SPHE programmes and policy will be reviewed and evaluated regularly by the SPHE team.

The next review will be in 2023-2024.