

Social, Personal, and Health Education Policy

Introductory Statement:

The SPHE Policy was reviewed in November 2023.

Rationale:

- To guide teachers in adopting a consistent and coherent approach to teaching SPHE in our school
- To assist them in their individual planning
- To ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the SPHE programme from Infants to Sixth Class

Vision:

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth, self-confidence and resilience while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way thus preparing them to play a meaningful role in their communities.

Aims:

The aims of social, personal and health education are

- to promote the personal development and 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 its aspects.
- to enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future.
- 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 interdependent 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 his/her 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 of, 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.

Content:

The SPHE curriculum is spiral in nature and all content will be delivered developmentally throughout the child's time in the primary school.

In planning for teaching SPHE, we will ensure that over a 2-year period children will study elements from all the strand units.

Strands and strand units

Junior Infants, 1st, 3rd and 5th will cover the strand units of **Self Identity, Taking Care of my Body, Safety and Protection, Myself and My family, Developing citizenship and Media Education**

Senior Infants, 2nd, 4th and 6th will cover the strand units of **Growing and Changing, Safety and Protection, Relating to Others, My Friends and Other People and Developing Citizenship.**

Mindful Matters is the programme used throughout the school.

Stay Safe is a mandatory programme which is taught under the strand **Safety and Protection**. It has been decided by staff that due to the importance of the **Stay Safe Programme** it be **taught every year.**

The sensitive objectives of RSE fall within the strands **Growing and Changing** and **Taking Care of my Body**. **These sensitive lessons must be taught.**

Because of the sensitive nature of the lessons, they are not covered in the child's Mindful Matters workbook but are covered in the Mindful Matters Teacher's Resource book. Home/School link sheets should be sent home when starting Stay Safe and RSE, so that parents/guardians are aware of what is being covered, and to promote partnership with them, in the delivery of the SPHE programme. Other Home/School links are at the discretion of the teacher. It has been decided that the sensitive issues in RSE will be taught throughout the school the week after the parent/teacher meetings in November.

The **Weaving Wellbeing Programme** is a supplementary resource to be used to promote the children's wellbeing.

The importance of educating children about internet safety is recognised and is taught yearly with special emphasis on Safer Internet Day. Use of mobile phones is discouraged in school, but if it necessary, a letter seeking principal permission is required.

Contexts for SPHE

SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts:

- Positive school climate and atmosphere
- Discrete time
- Integration with other subject areas
- Designated school wide weeks/days e.g Healthy Eating Week (2nd week in Sept), Friendship week (4th week in Sept), Mental Health Day in October (allowing children to experience joy by being outdoors, by being free to choose playful activities and by spending time building relationships), Safer Internet Day (Feb), Multi-cultural Week March/ April before Easter holidays.

Positive school climate and atmosphere

Teachers are aware of the importance of promoting a positive school climate. Our key messages are:

- We cater for the individual needs of the children. **Individual needs** may be social, emotional, spiritual, physical or intellectual. Through assessment, observation and discussion with parents/guardians we strive to identify and meet individual needs. Individualised reading schemes, Literacy lift off, Reading Recovery, differentiated learning in the classrooms, EBD classrooms and use of therapy dogs for children with behavioural and emotional difficulties are some of the ways we do this.
- The staff is aware that their role in helping children to **develop their self-esteem** is to create a positive environment within the school where everyone feels they belong and that they matter. This is done by treating each other with respect, greeting children by name, encouraging and praising them in their endeavours, displaying their work, positive re-enforcement, celebrating their birthday, honouring their out of school achievements e.g., boxing, swimming, drama, dancing etc. as well as in school achievements. We prioritise **inclusive and respectful language**. There is zero tolerance of racist, homophobic or sexist language.
- We believe that children learn to respect themselves and others through experiencing respect in their own lives and through seeing **respectful behaviour** being modelled by others. We strive towards calm, respectful and an age-appropriate response to discipline issues.
- We are seeking to achieve “**School of Sanctuary**” status for our school. As a school, we have undertaken a programme of learning, action and sharing, where welcome and inclusion is placed at the heart of the school’s identity. A core element of the Schools of Sanctuary focus is for students and staff to learn the many “why’s and how’s” of giving sanctuary, especially to refugees, migrants, marginalised ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups. A second core element is for schools to model and celebrate diversity and difference, striving to ensure that every child or young person respects the identities, cultures, and values of others.

To achieve these core elements, we actively learn about, and celebrate children's native countries and languages, and strive to acknowledge these in class and throughout the school. This is reflected in displays, reflecting the countries the children’s families come from, their flags and their languages. **Multi-cultural activities** are held annually before Easter. Our school calendar now includes festivals and major ceremonies of the cultures in our school. Our EAL Team are working to ensure **inclusivity** of children in our daily classroom activities, and of parents through our varied school communications.

We also celebrate the language, culture, history and geography of Ireland and in doing so, we promote integration. We use a virtual notice board (Padlet) on our school website to communicate our school's journey in achieving School of Sanctuary status.

We work to develop an **effective communication** system between school and home. Facebook, Teams, a monthly newsletter, use of school journals, text messages and notes are important in this, as well as formal and informal parent/teacher meetings. The Principal, Deputy Principal, HSCL and other teachers meet and greet parents/guardians and children at the school gate every morning, and this gives an opportunity for communication.

Parents/guardians of in-coming Junior Infants are invited to meet the Junior Infant teachers in the summer term. They are given an opportunity and encouraged to visit the classrooms with their children in June. In September the parents are invited for 'a cuppa and a chat', to facilitate meeting other parents and to strengthen home/school relationships. Shared activities such as play days (where parents get a chance to play with their children) are also planned as well as curriculum support meetings eg blending.

- We support a **health-promoting physical environment**. Emphasis is placed on a healthy lifestyle -P.E., The Daily Mile, Go Noodle, and active homework. We emphasise co-operative learning in our P.E. lessons which fosters respect and friendship among our diverse group of students. A "**Co-operative learning**" folder for P.E. is available on Teams. Active after-school activities are encouraged as well as activities at playtime. We have added a climbing wall to our yard as well as new yard markings to encourage game playing.
- A **Healthy Eating Week** takes place at the beginning of each school year. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the children and parents are aware of what constitutes a healthy diet, what food is acceptable in a school lunch and kick-starting healthy eating for the school year. Healthy school lunches and snacks are provided for all children. A simplified version of the Healthy Eating Policy is included in the school diary. Parents and children are reminded of our healthy eating policy at the beginning of each term.
- The **importance of play** is recognised as a way of allowing children opportunities to experience wellbeing, to enrich and strengthen academic learning, and to build a greater sense of self and self-esteem. The introduction of playful interactions on a daily basis allows children to learn to self-regulate, experience success and failure in a supervised and caring setting, to experience empathy and build lasting relationships.
- A '**Well-being Folder**', which all staff have access to has been added to Microsoft Teams. This contains resources such as: "Yoga for Kids" flashcards, Positive Affirmations, Mindfulness Exercises, "Emotional" flashcards to help build emotional awareness, 'Brain Break' ideas, breathing exercises, "Calm Down" flashcards to help anxious, angry or frustrated children, and conflict resolution ideas.
- Taking responsibility and **pride in the school** environment is encouraged through the children being actively involved in maintaining clean classrooms, our litter prevention programme, our involvement in the Green Schools Programme and through the promotion

of behavioural habits required for maintaining a clean environment. cf Our Green School Programme

- There is a **zero tolerance of bullying** and children and parents are encouraged to report any bullying issues to the class teacher who will deal with it as a matter of priority. Classes are surveyed regularly to help uncover any issues in class. cf Anti-Bullying Policy

Discrete time

SPHE may be timetabled for ½ hour per week, one hour per fortnight or blocks of 1 – 2 hours per month where feasible or appropriate. Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE programme as possible. The discrete time is used to develop and practise particular skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. Content objectives dealing with RSE and child protection are addressed through discrete time.

Approaches and Methodologies

Teachers know that active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach used in the SPHE programme. The following active learning strategies are promoted for SPHE:

- Drama activities
- Co-operative games
- Use of pictures, photographs and visual images
- Discussion: in pairs, small groups, with whole class
- Written activities: surveys, questionnaires, lists, check-lists, projects, worksheets
- Media Studies
- Information and communication technologies
- Looking at children's work: portfolios, projects ...
- Circle Time
- Social stories

Assessment

Children's progress in SPHE is assessed mainly through teacher observation.

- The ability of the child to co-operate and work in groups or to work independently
- The informal interactions between the child and adults and between the child and other children.
- Emotional maturity
- The quality of presentation of work
- The participation and interest of the child in a variety of activities

Children with different needs

The requirements of children with special needs will be taken into consideration when planning class lessons and related activities. As a number of our children have experienced bereavement, trauma or neglect, they are supported, and consideration is given to meeting their individual needs in the most appropriate manner.

Equality of participation and access

All children have equal access to services, facilities and amenities within the school.

- As a co-ed school we are conscious of the need to give equal opportunities to boys and girls to participate in discussion, debate and presentation.

- We recognise the diverse nature of our school community which is comprised of people from many different cultures and we are sensitive to different social and religious backgrounds of the children.
- We are also sensitive to the fact that our children are coming from a variety of family situations.
- We recognise that our older children may be becoming aware that they are LGBT+ and we are sensitive to protect their self-esteem.
- We identify provision required, when necessary, for children who may be experiencing any kind of disadvantage.

cf Equality of Access and Participation Policy

Organisation

Policies and Programmes that support SPHE

The Relationships and Sexuality Education programme (RSE), the Stay Safe programme and the Weaving Well-Being programme are integral parts of SPHE and are taught as such. (Mindful Matters is used throughout the school from J1 to 6th and is supplemented by Weaving Wellbeing from 2nd to 6th).

- An outline of the **RSE programme** will be given to parents when their child enrolls in the CBS under the heading SPHE. The parents can request, in writing, that their child be withdrawn or express concerns and request an opportunity to discuss them with the teacher. A copy of this letter will be kept in the child's file as it will be necessary to contact the parents who expressed concerns, each year.
- Provision will be made where necessary for parents who wish to withdraw their child from class on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of their education.
- Teachers will teach only the topics laid down for the class and will respond only to those questions on the programme for that year. If a child asks for information that is not in line with the curriculum content he/she will be encouraged to ask these questions at home. The guiding principles at all times for the teacher being the school ethos and the age and stage appropriateness of the pupils.
- The school will endeavour to accommodate the request of any teacher who does not wish to teach a particular topic.
- Teachers will not answer personal questions about themselves nor require the child to give information of a personal nature which they do not wish to share.

SPHE links to the following policies: RSE, Substance Use, Child Protection, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying, Healthy Eating, PE, Health and Safety and our Green School Policy. Teachers are expected to be familiar with them and ensure that they are followed when addressing these issues.

Homework

The SPHE homework reflects the active learning approach as described in the curriculum and acts as a link between home and school.

Resources

Each class teacher has a Mindful Matters Teacher's Resource Book, a Stay Safe manual, a set of 3 Conflict Resolution posters and a food pyramid poster, 2nd to 6th share 'Weaving Wellbeing' resources and each SET room has a Weaving Wellbeing pupil workbook,

6th class have copies of Busy Bodies for each child.

The Incredible Years and other books promoting positive behaviour, behaviour management, well-being etc are also available in the school.

Websites such as Webwise, Safefood and HI are also recommended.

An Acceptable Usage policy is in place to ensure children's safety when using the internet.

Guest Speakers: The community garda is available to talk about all aspects of safety, bullying and his/her work as a Garda etc. Other speakers may include the Community Nurse, Green School spokesperson and speaker on Internet Safety. The class teacher remains with the class at all times during these visits.

Staff Development

- All teachers are trained in Child Protection
- Teachers are notified of courses related to the teaching of SPHE. Time is allowed at staff meetings to share skills/information acquired.
- A number of teachers have received training in Incredible Years
- Speakers are invited to speak to staff about SPHE related matters e.g. Behavioural Issues (NEPS), Internet Safety, The Anti-bullying Campaign (Sean Fallon) and Staff Wellbeing.

Parental/Guardian Involvement

The involvement of parents/guardians is seen as crucial and reflects the ethos of the school.

- Parents/guardians are invited and encouraged to participate in escorting children to and from the swimming pool in junior classes.
- They support our Healthy Eating policy by following guidelines for healthy lunches.
- Parents/guardians from different cultures are invited to be involved in our Multicultural activities,
- Parents/guardians are made aware of sensitive areas covered in the SPHE programme and are given an opportunity to withdraw their children for these lessons or to discuss concerns with the class teacher.
- Parents/guardians are also notified when SPHE programmes are beginning and home/school links are maintained eg Stay Safe, RSE, Weaving Well-Being.
- Parents/grandparents are invited to a 'Celebration of Grandparents Ceremony' each year.
- Parents/guardians are invited to Christmas concerts and the 6th class Graduation Ceremony.
- The Parents Council represents the views of parents and is active in fundraising and supporting family celebrations with refreshments.

Community Links

Visits from our community guard and our Parish Priest contribute to the teaching of SPHE. The school liaises with the Health Promotion unit of the HSE, Webwise and other agencies to assist, where appropriate, the school's implementation of SPHE.

The PE Dept has forged strong links with physical activity providers in the local community, children participate in in school coaching and training and are encouraged to participate in competitive and non-competitive events outside of school. We believe participation helps to develop resilience among our students.

Success Criteria

Assessment by teachers and staff.

Is there an observable reduction in conflict situations, use of offensive language, bullying behaviour etc. among the students?

Children may be surveyed at the end of Weaving Wellbeing Programme to see what skills they have learnt that they feel will help them in their life.

Children's lunches will be surveyed at intervals to see if there is an improvement in healthy eating.

Implementation

Roles and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff to read and become familiar with both the policy and their individual role in implementing it regardless of their role as a class or SEN teacher, as delivery of the SPHE policy, in particular, lends itself to being delivered by both groups of staff.

The SPHE co-ordinator will co-ordinate the progress of the plan, encourage and accept feedback and report to staff on findings.

This plan was reviewed in 2023 and should be implemented with immediate effect.

Review

This plan will be reviewed again in 2025. Feedback is welcome at any time to the SPHE coordinator.

Ratification

This school plan was formulated by the principal and staff and approved by the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire na mBraithre, CBS Primary Tralee in February 2024.

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: 

Dated: 12/02/2024