

KILRUSH COMMUNITY SCHOOL

SOCIAL PERSONAL HEALTH EDUCATION (S.P.H.E.) POLICY AND RELATIONSHIPS SEXUAL EDUCATION (R.S.E.) POLICY

In this policy document all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term “parent” is taken to include “guardian”.



MISSION STATEMENT

In an Irish and global context, Kilrush Community School endeavours to create an inclusive community of mutual understanding and respect within which students can learn and thrive. We co-create opportunities for every student to fulfil their potential.

Kilrush Community School Aims

1. To develop an excellent learning environment which promotes high expectations of individual performance from students.
2. To give students access to a broad and balanced curriculum within a caring, co-operative and inclusive community.
3. To ensure that all staff and students enjoy equality of esteem and opportunity.
4. To foster among students an awareness of their environment, heritage and health enabling them to play a positive role within the local and wider community.
5. To equip students with a strong sense of self-esteem, self-discipline and self-motivation.
6. To foster universal values of care, inclusion respect and innovation.

a) **Definition of S.P.H.E., its aims and how it links with the school ethos**

S.P.H.E. is a programme that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

The aims of S.P.H.E.

- ❑ To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
- ❑ To promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
- ❑ To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making.
- ❑ To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- ❑ To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

The above aims of S.P.H.E. contribute to the overall aims of Kilrush Community School in promoting the holistic development of our students.

Child Protection

The school has a separate Child Protection Policy in place, copies of which are available on the school website or from the school office. This policy is in line with Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools, 2017.

b) **Outline of programme content and teaching methods**

The syllabus for S.P.H.E. has been presented in ten modules, each of which appears in each year of the three-year cycle as outlined in Appendix A. The ten modules are:

- ❑ Belonging and Integrating
- ❑ Self-Management – a sense of purpose
- ❑ Communication Skills
- ❑ Physical Health
- ❑ Friendships
- ❑ Relationships and Sexuality
- ❑ Emotional Health
- ❑ Influences and decisions
- ❑ Substance Use
- ❑ Personal Safety

As of September 2021, Kilrush Community School will deliver the short course in the form of four strands outlined below.

SPHE Short Course

Strand 1	<i>Who am I?</i>	Develops self-awareness and self esteem
Strand 2	<i>Minding myself and others</i>	Reflection on self and other care
Strand 3	<i>Team Up</i>	Building relationship skills
Strand 4	<i>Mental Health and Wellbeing</i>	Building positive mental health, learning tools to support themselves and others in challenging times

The emphasis will be on developing skills, understanding, attitudes and values important to all these areas.

The Department of Education recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the S.P.H.E. programme in harmony with the students' needs and the school's resources.

Kilrush Community School recognises that the primary responsibility for the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of children lies with their parents. However, the school has a long tradition of supporting parents in this role.

A summary of what the school provides both formally and informally to promote holistic development of our students is included in Appendix B.
S.P.H.E is seen as building on this.

c) Teaching Methods: How S.P.H.E. will be taught and timetabled.

Because the programme is primarily life skills-based, teaching methods must be of an experiential nature with an emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods will be child centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student. Ratified resources are listed in the link below and are the sole resources in use at KCS from 2024/2025.

<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/SPHE-RSE-toolkit/Resources-for-learning-and-teaching-in-SPHE-RSE/>

Experiential Learning Themes by Term

Course coordinators will introduce one new experiential methodology from training, to the team, at each subject planning meeting or at the beginning of each new term. Teachers will be encouraged to experiment with new methodologies and feedback to the team on best practice. These will be noted in subject planning minutes and compiled into a list of resources in action at the end of the year.

The class atmosphere must be one of respect for the privacy of the individual and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. S.P.H.E. is allocated one class period a week for 1st years, 2nd years and 3rd years and will be taught in the context of the Mission Statement of Kilrush Community School. Please refer to Appendix A. This form must be signed by both the student and parent/guardian and returned to the S.P.H.E. teacher at the start of each school year.

d) Staff development, training and resource issues.

The value placed on S.P.H.E. by the school will be evident by the commitment on the part of management to develop a core of trained S.P.H.E. teachers. In-Career development is an integral part of this programme.

e) Sensitive issues/Participation

S.P.H.E. is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality is one module of the Programme. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some or all R.S.E. classes but are encouraged to provide alternative R.S.E. at home. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of R.S.E. to make suitable arrangements with school Management for the welfare of their child at these times.

Where children are withdrawn from R.S.E. the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of school content passed onto them by other students.

Class discussion will be of a general nature and will not be personally directed in accordance with the previously agreed class ground rules.

Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher nor from student to student. Only questions directly pertinent to the lesson content will be addressed in class.

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of S.P.H.E. class, the legal limits of confidentiality must always be observed. These limits are:

a) Child abuse

- i) Physical
- ii) Emotional
- iii) Sexual
- iv) Neglect

b) Intention to harm self or others.

Where possible students should be informed of these limits before making a disclosure. Students will be briefed on the role of mandated persons and the schools' DLP and Deputy DLP as per Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the S.P.H.E. course content, the needs of our students will be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher will refer students to other supportive links or services internal or external to the school community. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student.

(f) The Role of Visitors

Visiting speakers are seen as complimenting and supporting the S.P.H.E. programme in the school and must work within the framework of this and other relevant school policies as well as circular 43/18. Teachers inviting these speakers must:

- i. Inform the Principal in advance.
- ii. Ensure the visit is consistent with guidelines circ. 43/18
- iii. Make the speaker aware of the ethos and S.P.H.E. policy of the school.
- iv. Agree the content of the presentation in advance.
- v. Do preparatory and follow-up work where possible to ensure follow through.
- vi. Under normal circumstances remain with the class group during the visit.

g) How parents and students will be informed.

Parents of individual Junior Cycle class groups will be informed via text message prior to commencement of RSE blocks of learning. It will be the responsibility of the class teacher to inform office administration staff to send this text in advance of commencement. The text will direct parents via a link to where policy and curriculum plans will be visible.

Students will be informed at the beginning of the year when the curriculum plan for the year is outlined to them. They will be reminded again when parent text is sent, prior to the commencement of RSE blocks.

Senior Cycle students will follow the revised Curriculum Specification for SPHE Education. This blended approach to RSE learning nullifies the requirement to text parents re book delivery from September 2027.

h) How Staff will be informed.

Engagement with all stakeholders is promoted in policy development and implementation at whole school level including staff training/meetings. The approved policy will be available for all in the school in hard copy kept in Principal's Office and shared/accessed electronically via school website and MS Office as appropriate.

This Section deals specifically with Senior Cycle Relationships and Sexuality Education

A. Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

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

"Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media."

B. Relationships and Sexuality Education within Social, Personal and Health Education

1. The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995, 1.2) 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 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. This policy also takes cognizance of Department of Education Circulars 0023/10 and 0037/10.

C. The Aims of our Relationships and Sexuality Education Programme

1. Relationships and Sexuality Education which is located in the overall framework of Social, Personal and Health Education, has as its specific aims:
 - (a) To help pupils understand and develop friendships and relationships.
 - (b) To promote an understanding of sexuality.
 - (c) To promote 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 pupils to develop attitudes and values toward their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework in keeping with the policy of the school.
 - (f) To provide opportunities for pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that helps them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way.
2. RSE seeks to empower students to be sexually healthy. To be sexually healthy means:
 - I am **comfortable with my body** and my sexuality.
 - I can **talk effectively** with my peers, family and partner.
 - I **know my body** and how it functions.
 - I **understand the risks, responsibilities and consequences** of sexual behaviour.
 - I am able to **recognise risks and ways to reduce them**.
 - I know how to **access and use health care services** and information.
 - I am able to **set boundaries** when it comes to sex and sexual relationships.

- I act **responsibly** according to my **personal values**.
- I am able to form and maintain **healthy relationships**.

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

D. Guidelines for the Management and Organization of Relationships and Sexuality Education in our School

1. Arrangements regarding the teaching of the programme and the deployment of staff will be made by the Principal in consultation with staff delivering SPHE/RSE and the Board of Management.

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 being of primary importance. Parents will be informed via text message prior to commencement of RSE blocks of learning and the text will direct parents via a link to where policy and curriculum plans will be visible. Delivery of the RSE program is mandatory, however, the school will respect the right of parents to withdraw their child from sensitive topics should they wish to address these from home. The RSE Policy has been designed in consultation with all stakeholders including parents and the views expressed by all stakeholders will be taken into account when reviewing the Policy. The policy is available in hardcopy from the school office or electronically via the school website.

3. Offering Advice:

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 students 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. Advice offered should not be directive and should be appropriate to the age of the pupil.

4. 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. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Principal/Deputy Principal and refer to the DLP where appropriate. 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.

5. (i) Confidentiality:

It is School policy that in circumstances where a pupil is considered at some risk of any type of abuse or in breach of the law, the teacher must refer this immediately to the Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection/Deputy Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection/Deputy Designated Liaison Person will decide whether to inform the parents and/or appropriate authorities and may arrange for counselling.

The following is also School policy:

- (a) Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality. All teachers are mandated persons under the updated Children First: National Guidance for the welfare and protection of children 2017.
- (b) Students must be made aware that any incident may be conveyed to the Principal and possibly to parents if the Principal decides that it is in the best interest of the pupil to notify parents.
- (c) Teachers must use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information. This judgement must be consistent with Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.
- (d) 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.

(ii) Age of Consent:

The age of consent for sexual activity is 17 years of age.

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary Schools states in 4.1.1 and 4.2.1 that:

- 4.1.1 If a member of staff receives an allegation or has a suspicion that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse he/she should, without delay, report the matter to the Designated Liaison Person in that School. A written record of the report should be made and placed in a secure location by the Designated Liaison Person. The need for confidentiality at all times as previously referred to in Section 5 (i) of these guidelines, should be borne in mind. The supports of the School should continue to be made available to the child.
- 4.1.2 If the Designated Liaison Person is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion or allegation he/she should report the matter to the relevant Health Board immediately.

Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 state that in addition to the above;

Every registered teacher, as a mandated person, now also has a statutory obligation to make his or her own mandated report to Tusla where the concern about the child is at or above a threshold of harm as defined in the Act. However, a registered teacher who makes a mandated report to Tusla jointly with the DLP meets his or her statutory obligation to report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015.

6. The Division between Biological and Non-Biological Aspects of Sex Education

The school policy is that the Science Department deals primarily with the biological aspects of reproduction.

7. Using Visiting Speakers and Others

- (a) It is School Policy that most of the RSE Programme is best discussed openly with teachers who are known and trusted by the pupils. However visitors can enhance the quality of the provision as long as they are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned Programme of RSE as per department circular 43/18.
- (b) The SPHE Co-ordinator will provide the visitor, well in advance of the visit, with a copy of this school Policy. After gaining approval from the Principal for the visit the organizer

makes the visitor aware of the ethos of the School and the manner of delivery of the RSE Programme. Issues to consider are:

- (i) The degree of explicitness of the content and presentation.
- (ii) Will the visitor be accompanied by teaching staff?
- (iii) Will the staff take an active role in the visitor's activities?
- (iv) How will the visitor be prepared for the visit?
- (v) How will the visit be built upon and followed up?

8. Sexual Orientation

Teachers do not promote any one lifestyle as the only acceptable one for society and therefore it is inevitable and natural that sexual orientation will be discussed during a programme of sex education. One of the advantages of exploring issues concerning sexual orientation is the opportunity to correct false ideas, assumptions and address prejudice. Discussion of sexual orientation should be appropriate to the age of the pupils.

9. 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.

10. Special Needs

Students with special 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.

11. Sexual Activity:

It is advisable for teachers to give young people information on the age of consent.

E. Ongoing Support, Development and Review

Training:

1. All teachers involved in this work do not necessarily have to be 'experts' on the issues concerned. However, they do require sensitivity to the needs of the group, an ability to deal with questions openly/honestly and a preparedness to refer to more expert advice if necessary. The skills acquired in general teaching apply also to health education.
2. The school will facilitate teachers to obtain expert Department of Education endorsed training in this field, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the School to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

Resources

The School will purchase appropriate RSE teaching materials which have been identified by staff and PDST as useful and which have been approved by the Principal, within the normal budgetary framework and as general School resources allow.

The NCCA updated resource list is available here and as of 2024/2025 these are the only resources used by teaching staff in Kilrush Community School.

[https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/SPHE-\(1\)/SPHE-Toolkit/Resources-for-learning-and-teaching-SPHE-RSE/](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/SPHE-(1)/SPHE-Toolkit/Resources-for-learning-and-teaching-SPHE-RSE/)

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the RSE Programme

We are committed to monitoring the effectiveness of this programme.

This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. Current version follows the NCCA SPHE Senior Cycle curriculum framework.

https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/007175e5-7bb7-44c0-86cb-ba7cd54be53a/SCSEC_SPHE_Framework_English.pdf

The following core topics are covered in Senior Cycle RSE and are detailed in the above link over a minimum of six periods in each year of Senior Cycle.

1	Self-awareness and personal skills
2	Relationship skills
3	Sexual and Reproductive Health
4	Sexual Identity
5	Parenting
6	Personal Rights and Personal Safety
7	Being Health Literate

Assessment

AFL samples – detailed in link above

Sharing Learning intentions with students

Sharing success criteria with students

Involving students in self-assessment

Providing feedback that helps students recognise what they must do to close knowledge gaps

Assessment of Learning – SPHE Portfolio

Opening statement

Diary and review

Case study/action plan

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

SPHE / RSE Coordinator

Ms Claire Vaughan/A Haugh

RSE Senior cycle

Ms A Kelly

SPHE / RSE Teaching JC

Ms Brenda Honan / Ms Louise Neylon / Ms Ashling Kelly / Ms Sarah Fogarty/ Ms Hannah Keane.

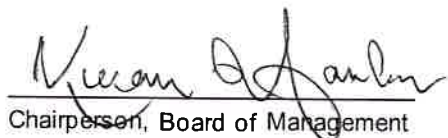
Wellbeing Coordinator

Ms Claire Vaughan

The class teacher will be responsible for delivery of the RSE content. Where any teacher is uncomfortable with an aspect of the programme, consideration will be given and appropriate support provided to ensure consistency of delivery for students. All members of staff will be made aware of the content of the RSE policy, including year heads, pastoral care team, SNA'S, guidance counsellor and SPHE coordinator.

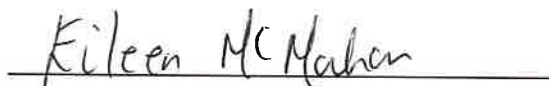
This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 29 / 09 / 26

Signed:


Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 29 / 09 / 26

Signed:



Date: 29 / 09 / 26

Next Review Date: — 1 Sept / 27

Appendix A

Kilrush Community School



Sample Ground Rules/Class Contract for S.P.H.E.

WE AGREE THAT THESE ARE THE WAYS IN WHICH WE CAN WORK FOR THE SUCCESS OF THIS GROUP.

*** Confidentiality:** Personal details which may be revealed in the class are not discussed outside the group, except with consent. I can talk about my learning in the class, the material being covered and the activities we are doing.

Responsibility: I will take responsibility for my own sharing and make “**I STATEMENTS**”. I will share responsibility for the progress of the class group.

Freedom: I have the freedom to opt out or pass in discussions.

Participation: I will participate and not dominate.

Listening: I will listen when another person is speaking.

Respect: I will respect others' views even when they are different from mine.

Request: If I want something I will put up my hand and ask for it.

Timekeeping: I will keep to the allotted time for the task.

Materials: I will bring the materials needed for the class and complete any home task so that the group can progress to the next stage of the learning.

Punctuality: I will be punctual.

SIGNED BY STUDENT: _____ **DATE:** _____

Appendix A continued...

Social, Personal and Health Education (Previous) Junior Cycle Programme 10 modules

Module	Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Belonging and Integrating	Coping with Change Joining a new group Appreciating Difference Bullying is everyone's business Coping with Loss	Looking Back, Looking Forward Group work Family ties	Goal Setting for Third Year Work Contract
Self Management	Organising Myself Organising my work at home and at school Balance in my life	What motivates me? Study Skills	Organising my time Planning for effective study Coping with examinations
Communication Skills	Express yourself Learning to listen Passive, Assertive and aggressive communication	Assertive communication	Learning to communicate Communication in situations of conflict
Physical Health	Body Care Healthy Eating Exercise	Body Care and Body Image	Physical exercise Relaxation Diet
Friendship	Making New Friends A Good Friend	The changing nature of friendship	Boyfriends and Girlfriends
Relationships and Sexuality	Me as Unique and Different Friendship Changes at Adolescence The Reproductive System Images of Male and Female Respecting myself and others	From conception to birth Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions Peer pressure and other influences Managing relationships Making responsible decisions Health and Personal safety	Body Image Where am I now? Relationships – what's important The three R's: respect, rights and responsibilities Conflict
Emotional Health	Recognising Feelings Respecting My Feelings and the Feelings of Others	Self Confidence Body image	Stress Feelings and Moods
Influences and Decisions	My Heroes	Positive and negative influences Making decisions	Making a good decision
Substance Use	Why use drugs? Alcohol: the facts Smoking and its effects Smoking: why, why not?	The effects of drugs Alcohol and its effects Alcohol: why, why not? Cannabis and its effects Cannabis: why, why not?	Ecstasy; the realities Heroin: the realities
Personal Safety	Looking after myself	Accidents at home Feeling threatened	Recognising unsafe situations Violence Help agencies

The Dept. of Education recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE programme most suitable for the students and the school.

Junior Cycle Short Course – Beginning September 2021

Overview of course strands

- Strand 1** Who am I?
 - Strand 2** Minding myself and others
 - Strand 3** Team up
 - Strand 4** Mental health and wellbeing
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- Strand 1** Focuses on developing self-awareness and building self-esteem.
- Strand 2** Provides opportunities for students to reflect on how they can best take care of themselves and others.
- Strand 3** Focuses on building relationship skills.
- Strand 4** Focuses on building positive mental health, examining young people's experience of mental ill health and learning how to support themselves and others in challenging times. The learning outcomes in this short course are aligned with the Level Indicators for Level

A detailed description of each strand is outlined in the Short Course specification below.

<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/10a6e6be-40dd-425b-9463-dabfb2131fcd/NCCA-JC-Short-Course-SPHE.pdf>

Appendix B

Programmes, structures and activities that promote the holistic development of the students of Kilrush Community School.

- ❖ Sport
- ❖ Drama
- ❖ Retreats
- ❖ Carol Service
- ❖ Pastoral Care
- ❖ Chaplain
- ❖ Green Schools
- ❖ School Tours
- ❖ L.C.V.P.
- ❖ L.C.A.
- ❖ Year Heads
- ❖ Tutors
- ❖ After School Study
- ❖ Young Scientist
- ❖ Guidance
- ❖ Class Captains
- ❖ Special Needs Teacher
- ❖ Learning Support
- ❖ Classroom Assistants
- ❖ Home School Liaison
- ❖ Fund Raising - Social Awareness
- ❖ Programme of Visiting Speakers
- ❖ Policies to support student welfare
- ❖ School Magazine
- ❖ Induction Day
- ❖ Competitions e.g. Texaco Art, Cookery
- ❖ J.C.S.P.
- ❖ Mentoring Programme
- ❖ Student's Council

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____
(Chairperson of board of management)

Date: _____

Signed: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Next Review Date: _____