



CBS Thurles

**Social Personal and Health Education
(SPHE)
Policy**

1. Introduction and Rationale

This policy outlines the provision of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) at CBS Thurles for both Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle students. SPHE is a core component of our school's commitment to the holistic development and wellbeing of all students.

SPHE provides structured opportunities for students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, attitudes and values they need to live healthy, fulfilling lives as individuals and as contributing members of society. This policy has been developed in line with Department of Education circulars, particularly Circular 0028/2023, and draws on resources and guidance materials provided by the Department of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1 Overall Aims

SPHE at CBS Thurles aims to:

- Enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living as socially responsible citizens
- Promote physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing
- Foster respect for themselves and others
- Develop critical thinking and decision-making skills
- Create a safe and supportive environment where sensitive issues can be explored
- Build resilience and coping strategies
- Promote healthy relationships and communication skills

2.2 Specific Objectives

Through SPHE, students will:

- Develop self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem
 - Understand physical, emotional and social changes during adolescence and young adulthood
 - Learn about health promotion, healthy lifestyles and risk-taking behaviours
 - Develop relationship and communication skills
 - Explore issues related to mental health and emotional wellbeing
 - Understand consent, respect and equality in relationships
 - Develop media literacy and critical thinking skills
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- Learn about rights, responsibilities and active citizenship

3. Junior Cycle SPHE Provision

3.1 Curriculum Framework

In line with Circular 0028/2023, CBS Thurles provides SPHE as part of the Wellbeing programme for all Junior Cycle students.

Time Allocation:

- 100 hours of SPHE spread across First, Second and Third Year
- SPHE is provided in each of the three years of Junior Cycle
- This forms part of a minimum 400-hour Wellbeing programme that also includes Physical Education (135 hours) and Civic, Social and Political Education (100 hours)

3.2 Curriculum Specification

Students follow the **NCCA SPHE Short Course specification** as outlined in the Junior Cycle Framework. The Junior Certificate SPHE syllabus (2000) was discontinued from September 2022.

3.3 Content Areas

The SPHE programme addresses learning outcomes across key wellbeing indicators:

- Active – promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles
- Responsible – making informed decisions and understanding consequences
- Connected – building positive relationships and communication skills
- Resilient – developing coping strategies and emotional regulation
- Respected – understanding rights, dignity and diversity
- Aware – developing self-awareness and understanding of mental health

3.4 Teaching and Learning Approaches

CBS Thurles uses a variety of teaching methodologies including:

- Active learning strategies
 - Discussion and debate
 - Group work and collaborative learning
 - Role play and scenarios
 - Case studies and problem-solving activities
 - Guest speakers (in accordance with school procedures)
 - Student reflection and journaling
 - Cross-curricular links where appropriate
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3.5 Resources

The school uses resources available from:

- Department of Education website (www.gov.ie/education)
- Oide teacher support service (oide.ie)
- NCCA SPHE Junior Cycle resources
- HSE health promotion resources
- Other approved resources in line with Circular 43/2018 guidance on external facilitators and programmes

Note: CBS Thurles does not use resources or materials produced or funded by the alcohol industry for education and awareness on alcohol, in accordance with Circular 0028/2023.

4.0 Transition Year SPHE

Where Transition Year is offered, the SPHE programme includes:

- Extended modules on mental health and wellbeing
- Workshops and presentations from external agencies (approved in accordance with school policy)
- Student-led projects and campaigns
- Links with community organisations and health services
- Opportunities for peer education initiatives

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Board of Management

- Ratifies the SPHE policy
- Ensures adequate resources are allocated
- Supports staff training and development

5.2 Principal

- Oversees implementation of the policy
- Ensures compliance with Department circulars
- Facilitates staff professional development
- Liaises with parents and Board of Management

5.3 Deputy Principal / Year Heads

- Support co-ordination of SPHE across year groups
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- Address pastoral care issues arising from SPHE lessons
 - Monitor student wellbeing

5.4 SPHE Co-ordinator

- Leads planning and implementation of the SPHE programme
- Co-ordinates resources and teaching materials
- Facilitates collaboration between SPHE teachers
- Organises external speakers and programmes
- Monitors and reviews the SPHE programme
- Arranges professional development opportunities
- Liaises with Oide and other support services

5.5 SPHE Teachers

- Deliver the SPHE programme in accordance with specifications
- Create a safe, respectful classroom environment
- Use appropriate, engaging teaching methodologies
- Attend relevant professional development
- Assess student learning (Junior Cycle)
- Follow child protection procedures
- Maintain appropriate boundaries and confidentiality
- Signpost students to support services where necessary

5.6 Students

- Engage actively and respectfully in SPHE classes
- Observe ground rules for discussion
- Respect confidentiality and diverse viewpoints
- Apply learning to their own lives
- Seek help when needed

5.7 Parents/Guardians

- Support the aims of the SPHE programme
- Reinforce learning at home
- Communicate with the school regarding concerns
- Are informed about programme content through school communications

6. Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)

RSE is an integral part of SPHE at both Junior and Senior Cycle. CBS Thurles follows Department guidance on RSE provision, addressing:

- Physical, emotional and moral development
- Relationships, communication and consent
- Human sexuality and sexual health
- Respect, equality and diversity
- Online safety and digital relationships

Parents are informed about RSE content and may request details of the programme. The school's Catholic ethos informs the values context within which RSE is delivered. (See RSE policy)

7. Links with Other Policies and Programmes

SPHE connects with and supports:

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Wellbeing Promotion Process
- Code of Behaviour
- Substance Use Policy
- Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- Guidance Plan
- Student Support Team procedures
- Critical Incident Management Plan

8. External Facilitators and Programmes

In accordance with Circular 43/2018, when engaging external facilitators CBS Thurles ensures:

- Programmes align with Department of Education Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice
- External facilitators complement, not replace, teacher-led SPHE
- Facilitators are appropriately qualified and Garda vetted
- Content is age-appropriate and curriculum-aligned
- Parents are informed
- Resources and materials are reviewed in advance
- Resources produced or funded by the alcohol industry are not used

9. Professional Development

CBS Thurles is committed to supporting SPHE teachers through:

- Access to Oide professional learning opportunities
- Whole-school planning time for SPHE team
- Sharing of resources and best practice
- Support for attendance at relevant training and conferences
- Access to online resources and materials
- Mentoring and peer support

10. Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed:

- Every three years as standard
- Following publication of new Department circulars or guidance
- In response to emerging student needs or issues
- Following whole-school evaluation or inspection
- When requested by Board of Management

12 Success Criteria

The SPHE programme is successful when:

- All students receive their full entitlement (100 hours Junior Cycle; weekly classes Senior Cycle)
- Students demonstrate increased knowledge, skills and positive attitudes
- Students can access support and apply learning to real-life situations
- Teachers feel confident and supported in delivering SPHE
- The programme reflects current best practice and Department guidance
- Parents and students express satisfaction with provision
- SPHE contributes to positive school climate and student wellbeing

13. Confidentiality and Disclosure

13.1 Teacher Confidentiality

SPHE teachers:

- Create an environment of trust and respect
 - Do not guarantee absolute confidentiality
 - Explain limits of confidentiality at the outset (child protection obligations)
 - Handle personal disclosures sensitively
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- Follow school procedures for reporting concerns

13.2 Student Confidentiality

Students are taught:

- To respect the privacy of their peers
- That what is discussed in SPHE class should not be repeated outside
- That personal information shared by classmates is confidential
- That teachers have a duty of care and must act on child protection concerns

14. Parental Involvement and Communication

CBS Thurles recognises parents as primary educators and seeks to:

- Communicate SPHE programme content through newsletters, website and parent meetings
- Provide information on age-appropriate topics being covered
- Invite parental input during policy review
- Respond to parental questions or concerns promptly
- Offer parent information sessions on wellbeing topics where feasible
- Signpost parents to support resources
- Maintain open dialogue about student wellbeing

Parents who wish to discuss any aspect of the SPHE programme should contact the SPHE Co-ordinator, Year Head or Principal.

- Childline / ISPCC – Support services information

15. Ethos and Values

CBS Thurles is a Catholic voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school's SPHE programme:

- Reflects the Catholic ethos and Edmund Rice values of compassion, justice, respect and excellence
- Promotes human dignity, respect for life and care for others
- Provides education within a moral and ethical framework
- Respects the beliefs and values of all members of the school community
- Encourages students to explore values and develop their own moral compass
- Supports the holistic development of each student – spiritual, moral, physical, emotional, social and intellectual

19. Links with Student Support Services

SPHE works alongside school support structures:

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- Guidance Counsellor – Individual support, personal counselling, career guidance
 - Year Heads – Pastoral care and year-group wellbeing
 - Student Support Team – Multi-disciplinary support for students with additional needs
 - Learning Support / SEN Team – Academic and learning support
 - National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) – Psychological assessment and consultation
 - External agencies – HSE, Tusla, CAMHS, community services

SPHE teachers signpost students to appropriate supports and refer concerns through school procedures.

20 Roles in Implementation

- Board of Management ratifies policy and ensures resources
- Principal oversees implementation and compliance
- SPHE Co-ordinator leads programme delivery and development
- All staff support SPHE aims and whole-school wellbeing approach
- Students and parents engage with and support the programme

Policy Approved by Board of Management:

Signed: Mary O'Dwyer (Chairperson) **Date:** April 2026
