



St. Killian's College

SPHE including RSE Policy

Mission Statement

In St Killian's we aim to develop the full potential of every student in a learning environment where fairness, understanding, success and discipline will be pursued.

This policy is based on the school's fundamental aim to foster in students an attitude of learning to serve them for life-long learning. Students are encouraged to strive for excellence at the level of their full potential.

Development of this Policy

Parents, staff & management were encouraged to play a meaningful role in the SPHE and R.S.E. policy formation, through a series of meetings, representation on the Policy Development Committee and the ratification of the finished product. Consultations took place with staff, parents and Board of Management in the writing of this policy.

This policy was drawn up by Emer Larkin, Melissa Flanagan and Rosalie Murphy

Rationale

The general aim of education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual, including the aesthetic, creative, cultural, emotional, intellectual, moral, physical, political, religious, social and spiritual development, for personal and family life, for living in the community, and for leisure. Commitment to education in the area of personal and social development arises out of this holistic aim of education and its underlying vision of the person. Such a commitment also emerges from a holistic vision of health—one that encompasses all the dimensions of life, including the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social and environmental, and the complex interplay between these dimensions which contributes to personal well-being and to positive inter-personal relationships.

Social, personal and health education (SPHE) provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competences to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development. All these decisions must be made in the context of the wider community. Support from the Board of Management, from the wider community and in particular from parents will be necessary for the successful implementation of a school's programme of SPHE.

It is therefore the rationale of St. Killian's to be committed to the education of students regardless of race, religion, gender or status. Relationships and Sexuality are integral parts of the human personality and impact biologically, psychologically, culturally, socially and spiritually. Relationships and Sexuality Education is a lifelong process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills, and the development of attitudes, beliefs, morals and values. While we believe that the primary responsibility for addressing these issues rests with parents, we acknowledge the vital part the school can play in supporting and complementing this.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide students with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Relationships and Sexuality Education aims to help students learn, at home and in school, about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others. This work will be based on developing a good self-image, promoting respect for themselves and others and providing them with appropriate information.

Relationship of Relationships and Sexuality Education to Social, Personal and Health Education

In St. Killian's, Relationships and Sexuality Education will be taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education at Junior and Senior Cycle. SPHE is a subject in the post primary school curriculum. SPHE contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development. SPHE is taught from first year to third year and is formally timetabled.

RSE will be facilitated in the following ways within our school:

- In the context of a positive school climate and atmosphere

- As part of timetabled S.P.H.E. at Junior cycle and as a standalone course at senior cycle

- On an integrated, cross-curricular basis

The RSE Curriculum is a spiral curriculum. This involves revisiting key topics in a developmental manner at regular intervals. As it is a progressive programme it is taught annually over the 5/6 year cycle.

Aims of our SPHE & RSE Programme

- To enhance the personal development, social skills, self-esteem, self-confidence and well-being of each student.
- To help students develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To enable the 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
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.
- To enable the student to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction
- To develop and promote in the student a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- To enable the student to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing

Management and Organisation

Parental Involvement:

Relationships and Sexuality Education is an on-going process throughout life. Parents and the family are acknowledged as the primary educators of their children. We work in a supportive role with the parents of our school, by complementing their role with a school based programme in R.S.E. The curriculum books and resource materials are available in the school and parents are welcome to borrow them if desired.

Withdrawal from RSE:

Since RSE is an obligatory requirement of the Department of Education and Science, it should be inclusive. St. Killian's Secondary School actively promotes the implementation of RSE and strongly discourages withdrawal. The school will, however, take account of parental concerns and a parent's right to withdraw a pupil from themes pertaining to sensitive issues will be honoured,

on the understanding that the parent(s) is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. Parents/Guardians are obliged to inform the school in writing of their decision to withdraw the student from the sensitive issues classes

Content & Curriculum:

All the content objectives of the SPHE and RSE Programme as set out by the department will be covered by the time students leave sixth year. It is school policy that the content objectives are covered with each class level as outlined in the SPHE curriculum, within the context of the school's ethos and mission. This will be achieved without personal bias or selection from the class teacher.

Junior Cycle Specification 2023 – Learning Outcomes

Strand 1: Understanding myself and others

Students should be able to:

- 1.1 explore the physical, social and emotional changes that happen during adolescence
- 1.2 reflect on their personal strengths and values and how they bring these into relationships
- 1.3 explore the range of influences and life experiences that can impact on self-image and self-esteem and identify ways to nurture a positive sense of self-worth
- 1.4 recognise the factors and influences that shape young people's self-identity, such as family, peers, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, race/ethnic background, dis/abilities, religious beliefs/world-views
- 1.5 reflect on gender equity and how gender stereotypes impact on expectations, behaviour and relationships
- 1.6 discuss experiences/situations of bias, inequality or exclusion³ and devise ways to actively create more inclusive environments
- 1.7 communicate in a respectful and effective manner and listen openly and sensitively to the views/feelings of others

1.8 reflect on the meaning and importance of empathy and discuss ways that it can be expressed

1.9 demonstrate self-management skills, including setting personal goals, delaying gratification, and self-regulation of thoughts, emotions and impulses.

Strand 2: Making healthy choices

Students should be able to:

2.1 consider the multifaceted nature of health and wellbeing, and evaluate what being healthy might look like for different adolescents, including how food, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to health and wellbeing

2.2 investigate how unhealthy products such as nicotine, vapes, alcohol, and unhealthy food and drinks are marketed and advertised

2.3 discuss societal, cultural and economic influences affecting young people when it comes to making healthy choices about smoking, alcohol and other addictive substances and behaviours, and how harmful influences can be overcome in real-life situations

2.4 demonstrate skills and strategies to help make informed choices that support health and wellbeing and apply them in real-life situations that may be stressful and/or involve difficult peer situations

2.5 discuss the physical, social, emotional and legal consequences of using addictive substances - immediate and long-term

2.6 consider scenarios where, for example, alcohol, nicotine, drugs, food and electronic devices might be used to cope with unpleasant feelings or stress, and discuss possible healthy ways of coping

2.7 assess the benefits and difficulties associated with their online world and discuss strategies for dealing with a range of scenarios that might arise

2.8 discuss how to share personal information, images, opinions and emotions in a safe, responsible and respectful manner online and in person

2.9 explore why young people share sexual imagery online and examine the risks and consequences of doing this.

2.10 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information, supports and services about health and wellbeing.

Strand 3: Relationships and sexuality

Students should be able to:

- 3.1 reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.2 examine benefits and difficulties experienced by young people in a range of relationships - friendships, family relationships, and romantic/intimate relationships
- 3.3 identify signs of healthy, unhealthy and abusive relationships
- 3.4 appreciate the importance of setting healthy boundaries in relationships and consider how to show respect for the boundaries of others
- 3.5 consider the importance of taking care of their reproductive health
- 3.6 appreciate the breadth of what constitutes human sexuality, and how sexual orientation and gender identity are experienced and expressed in diverse ways
- 3.7 explore the pressures to become sexually intimate and discuss ways to show respect for people's choices
- 3.8 appreciate the importance of seeking, giving and receiving consent in sexual relationships, from the perspective of building caring relationships and from a legal perspective
- 3.9 explain the importance of safer sexual activity with reference to methods of contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- 3.10 discuss the influence of popular culture and the online world, in particular, the influence of pornography, on young people's understanding, expectations and social norms in relation to sexual expression
- 3.11 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy advice, support and services related to relationships and sexual health.

Strand 4: Emotional wellbeing

Students should be able to:

- 4.1 discuss the fluid nature of emotional wellbeing and ways to nurture and protect it
- 4.2 recognise and acknowledge their emotions and recognise the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- 4.3 consider the impact of stress and draw upon a variety of techniques to help self-regulate emotions and cope with the day-to-day stresses of life
- 4.4 discuss ways to support themselves and others in challenging times and where/how/when to seek support, if needed
- 4.5 explore how emotional wellbeing can be affected by factors within our control, such as sleep, diet, exercise, substance use and online exposure, and factors beyond our control
- 4.6 recognise different kinds of abusive and bullying behaviour that can occur in interactions online and in person
- 4.7 explain why noticing and responding to different kinds of abusive or bullying behaviour that can occur in person and online is important and discuss appropriate responses including, why, how, where and when to report
- 4.8 identify actions young people can take, without putting themselves at risk, in situations where they are aware of incidents of abusive behaviour or bullying happening and explore the barriers to standing up
- 4.9 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information and services aimed at supporting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Senior Cycle Specification 2024 - Learning Outcomes

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Strand Outline: Within this strand students will explore the factors that influence their physical, social, spiritual, emotional and mental wellbeing and the relationships between these. They will learn ways to take care of themselves and stay as healthy as possible, with a particular focus on gaining awareness, skills, techniques and information to protect their mental health.

Students learn about: Factors that influence health and wellbeing generally

Students should be able to:

- 1.1 explore the determinants of good health
- 1.2 investigate ways a person can influence their holistic health, including physical activity, food, sleep, social connections, positive self-image and connecting with nature, and discuss how these are related
- 1.3 examine social norms, attitudes and beliefs related to alcohol, tobacco/vaping and substance use

Students learn about: Fostering positive mental health

Students should be able to:

- 1.4 explore the factors that influence mental health and wellbeing, including the influence of family, community, peers, school, social media, digital technology, alcohol and mood-altering drugs, and one's self-image and identity
- 1.5 recognise helpful and unhelpful thinking patterns, including negative self-talk, and how these can affect emotions and behaviour
- 1.6 describe and draw on a variety of strategies that can help regulate and manage thoughts and emotions in order to nurture positive mental health

Students learn about: Coping with emotional or mental health challenges

Students should be able to:

- 1.7 recognise the signs and symptoms of low mood, stress and anxiety in themselves and others and recognise when help should be sought, where to go and how to access help if needed
- 1.8 discuss ways of responding to low mood, stress and anxiety
- 1.9 explain the pathways towards addiction, the signs and consequences of different kinds of addictions and where to go and how to access help, if needed

Students learn about: Safely managing social situations

Students should be able to:

1.10 discuss and devise ways to safely manage social situations where their own or others' health or safety may be at risk.

2 The spiritual dimension of wellbeing relates to being able to experience a sense of awe and wonder and knowing that life has meaning and purpose. (Primary Curriculum Framework, NCCA, 2023)

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality

Strand outline: Within this strand students will explore the wide range of relationships that are important for their lives with a particular focus on gaining the awareness, knowledge and skills to support them in creating and nurturing respectful, caring and healthy relationships. This strand also supports students to recognise and be empowered to respond to instances of abuse or violence in relationships.

Note: Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.

Students learn about: Healthy Relationships

Students should be able to:

2.1 demonstrate the awareness and skills needed for nurturing healthy in-person and online relationships, including respecting boundaries, communicating effectively, navigating difficult conversations, preventing and managing conflict and dealing with break-ups

2.2 reflect on how their attitudes, beliefs, values and identity, and those of others, can influence the dynamics of families, friendships and romantic relationships

2.3 discuss the need for consent and the importance of care, respect, empathy, trust and mutual pleasure within a sexual relationship.

Students learn about: Gender, Culture and Social Norms

Students should be able to:

2.4 examine how both positive and harmful attitudes around gender are perpetuated in the media, online, and in society and discuss strategies for challenging and changing harmful attitudes and narratives.

Students learn about: Abusive and Violent Relationships

Students should be able to:

2.5 identify and consider common signs of abusive relationships, including coercive control

2.6 explore the root causes and consequences of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV), and outline the supports and services available, and protections under the law

2.7 investigate the possible influence of pornography on attitudes, behaviours and relationship expectations and what supports are available for those impacted by pornography

2.8 discuss image-based abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape, and what to do and how to seek support if they or someone they know has experienced any of these.

Students learn about: Sexual Health

Students should be able to:

2.9 understand the components of sexual health including fertility across the life-cycle, reproductive choices, sexual functioning, safer sexual practices, possible responses to an unplanned pregnancy, and how to access sexual health information and services.

Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Strand outline: Within this strand students will gain specific knowledge and skills to support them as they make the transition to adulthood and learn how to take greater responsibility for themselves. This includes being enabled to manage choices, develop the skills that are needed to plan for the future, establish and stick to good habits, and achieve goals. It also supports students in

learning how to take care of themselves in times of change or challenge, understanding their rights and responsibilities before the law, and building the skills needed to advocate for and express solidarity with those experiencing discrimination or inequality.

Students learn about: Self Management and Self-care skills

Students should be able to:

3.1 consider strategies for self-care that can help maintain health and prevent ill-health

3.2 demonstrate self-management skills necessary for life

3.3 explore a range of life events where they might experience change, loss or heartache and discuss how to care for themselves and/or others during these times and where to find support.

Students learn about: Rights and responsibilities before the law

Students should be able to:

3.4 summarise accurately their rights, responsibilities and protections before the law as a young adult with reference to online communicating, consent, alcohol and drug use, their work-place rights and right to access services.

Students learn about: Ways to advocate for and create greater equality

Students should be able to:

3.5 demonstrate the confidence and skills needed to be their own person and be able to advocate for themselves and others, even if it means standing out from the crowd

3.6 recognise when people are experiencing discrimination and demonstrate the skills needed to express solidarity in a range of situations.

3 The Equal Status Acts prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community. These grounds are a useful lens for engagement with this learning outcome.

Timetabling:

Five 40 minute class periods, over the three years, are timetabled for the junior cycle programme for SPHE. One 40 minute class period per week is timetabled for senior cycle students for SPHE. The RSE policy committee felt strongly that treating RSE differently than the rest of the SPHE programme intimates to the children that it is "not normal" and may build barriers in the case of children who had a problem they wished to discuss.

All content of SPHE and RSE will be covered but at a pace and level that is appropriate to the students of that year.

Terminology:

In teaching issues related to RSE, teachers will use the correct biological terms for parts of the body.

Questions:

Questions arising from curriculum content will be addressed by the teacher in a sensible, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class. Pupils will be informed that that question/issue is not on the programme, and they will be referred back to the parent(s). Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate.

Confidentiality and Child Protection:

Where there is disclosure by a student of abuse/neglect of some sort, the school will follow the Department of Education and Science child protection guidelines and guidelines as set out by the School Policy. It will be referred to the DLP or DDLP

Family Status:

We acknowledge the different family units that are represented in school and will endeavour to treat all situations sensitively

Sources and Resources:

The SPHE and RSE Programmes and other resources that are deemed suitable by the Principal/SPHE co-ordinator and SPHE /RSE teachers, will primarily be used for the delivery of the SPHE and RSE themes. Use of textbooks: Health

and Wellbeing 1, 2 and 3 by Edco, HSE Resources Online, NCCA Toolkit, Consent Programme, Busy Bodies Video Clips

On-going support, development and review

Management & The Board of Management at St. Killian's will continue to foster the development of an SPHE & R.S.E school policy. The programme of work will be reviewed at regular intervals by teaching staff members & management.

St. Killian's will ensure access to in-service and career development opportunities for teachers and the policy committee.

The policy and programme will be reviewed by the policy committee after the first year and every four years thereafter

(Or earlier if issues or changes in curriculum arises).

Any amendments necessary, because of reviews, will be undertaken.

Reviewed by: E. Larkin, M. Flanagan, R. Murphy

Date: 22/10/2024

Approved by Board of Management:

Date of next review: 22/10/28

Signed Michael Maher Date 03/03/2025
Chairman of BOM

Signed Michelle Hynes Date 3/3/25
Principal