

SPHE Policy

Introduction

St. Laurence O' Toole's Special School recognises that SPHE is a very important subject for our young people and it is to be regarded as a core subject in terms of meeting the needs of our children who have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. This policy outlines our whole school approach to teaching SPHE. The plan will form the basis for teacher's long and short-term planning. It will also inform other members of the school community of the approaches and methodologies used in our school.

Rationale

St. Laurence O' Toole's Special School values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. The school community includes students and their families/guardians, teachers, ancillary staff, Board of Management and we provide a safe, caring school environment where every child is cherished and helped to achieve their maximum potential intellectually, physically and emotionally. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the holistic learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom. Our commitment is to learning in its broadest sense and our procedures and practices reflect this. Respect for the uniqueness of each person in our community commits us to maintaining a caring working environment in which all can achieve fulfilment. All aspects of the school, the range of subjects, classes, learning for life programmes, outdoor pursuits, sports, trips, and the organisational structure of the school reflect this commitment to learning and personal growth.

Definition of SPHE

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Aims and Objectives (as stated in Curriculum)

- **To promote the physical, mental and emotional development and well-being of the students.**
- **To promote self-esteem and self-confidence.**
- **To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making now and in the future.**
- **To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.**
- **To enable the student to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world.**

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 context.**
- **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 action.**
- **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.**

Context and timetabling:

SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts in St. Laurence o' Toole's School:

- **Formal SPHE lessons; SPHE is allocated 30 mins per week on each class timetable. These formal lessons are given by the youth worker. Extra time is allocated when a particular topic needs to be covered or visiting speakers are available to deliver a topic, eg: Accord worker covering RSE Programme. Dental Hygienist visit etc.**
- **Positive school climate and atmosphere;**

St Laurence O' Toole's School aims to create a positive atmosphere by:

- a) Building effective communication between all members of the school community; regular contact with parents, visits from the community worker, regular staff meetings and regular colleague support meetings ensure that this is done through a whole school approach.**
 - b) Catering for individual needs of all students.**
 - c) Creating a health-promoting environment.**
 - d) Enhancing self-esteem of all children.**
 - e) Fostering respect for diversity.**
 - f) Fostering inclusive and respectful language.**
- **Personal time; The youth worker is available for one-to-one sessions where needed. Arrangements are made for students to receive one-to-one support where staff deem necessary. This service is also available for all staff.**

- **Integration with other subject areas; Teachers will endeavour to adopt a thematic approach to SPHE by integrating it with cross curricular links such as:**
 - a) **Swimming & football.**
 - b) **Outdoor trips and activities.**
 - c) **Religious Education.**
 - d) **Cookery.**
 - e) **Weekly/Monthly activities.**
 - f) **Classroom based JCSP initiatives/statements.**
- **TCI: The behavioural management system adopted and implemented in St. Laurence O' Toole's School throughout the day, provides opportunity for the pupils to develop co-regulatory skills and self-regulatory skills in managing their behaviour. The collaborative approach facilitates personal growth and development by the pupils in managing feelings, connecting feelings with behaviour and exploring new and alternative ways to behave.**

Content and Teaching Methodologies:

Through participation in the SPHE Programme the students will encounter a wide range of issues through a variety of learning experiences. These issues will be addressed in ten modules, each of which appears in each year of the three-year cycle. The emphasis will be on building skills, understanding, attitudes and values important in all these areas.

The ten modules are:

- **Identity, who am I?**
- **Friendships and Relationships**

- **Decision Making and Influences.**
- **Relationships and Sexuality**
- **Gender Awareness**
- **Sexual Health**
- **Positive Health (Mental and Physical)**
- **Substance Use**
- **Personal Safety**
- **Understanding the Youth Justice System**

SPHE is primarily skills-based and so teaching methods must be of an experiential nature with the emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods will be student centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student. The class atmosphere must be one of respect for the privacy of the individual teacher and student and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. A respectful code of conduct is expected from all participants. Every class establishes ground rules which are referred to throughout the lessons.

Teaching Methodologies may include:

- **Talk and discussion.**
- **Skills through Content.**
- **Collaborative learning.**
- **Problem-solving.**
- **Use of the Environment.**
- **Group work.**
- **Role play.**
- **Brainstorming.**
- **Debating.**
- **Project work.**
- **Art work.**

- **Multi-media materials**
- **Case studies.**
- **Research.**
- **Visiting speakers.**
- **Team teaching.**
- **Peer teaching.**
- **Responding to controversial topics.**

Resources:

A budget is available for SPHE and is used to purchase resources and/or textbooks and to facilitate workshops, guest speakers and awareness raising initiatives throughout the school year. Resources include:

- **DES Syllabus and Guidelines.**
- **ON My Own Two Feet**
- **Stay Safe Programme**
- **Minding Me, My Wellbeing I & 2.**
- **Grow Up, Junior Cycle SPHE.**
- **Behaviour Matters, Basic Skills for Life.**
- **Responding to Eating Disorders & Body Issues.**
- **Healthy Food Programm.**
- **Healthy Bodies and Healthy Minds.**
- **Actions and Reactions.**
- **A Better internet.**
- **Selfie importance.**
- **Body Whys.**
- **Copping On.**
- **Local Drugs Taskforce.**
- **Swan Youth Services.**

Confidentiality and Referral to Supportive Links;

- **Participation:** Parents are requested to approve their children's participation in SPHE classes.
- **Sensitive Issues:** 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 in class by a teacher, or from student to student. Only questions directly pertinent to the lesson content will be addressed in class. The SPHE teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Community Worker and Family Therapist, and the DLP.
- **Referral:** While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the needs of 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 or outside agency as per Circular 0081/2017. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student.
- **Circular 0081/2017: Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017**
 - o 'Every registered teacher, as a Mandated Person, has the statutory obligation to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to the Child and Family Agency

(Tusla) [...] and is required to [sic] assist Tusla in the assessment of child protection risk, if so requested.'

o Any concerns should be reported to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and consideration given whether 'it is necessary for [...] the teacher to make a mandated report to Tusla.'

- **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**
- **Underage sexual intercourse**

Any disclosure will be reported to the Designated Liaison Person in compliance with the Child Protection Policy and the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2011. SPHE teachers will inform students of the limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the year, remind them at necessary points throughout the year and where possible before making a disclosure.

Staff Development:

Teachers are made aware of any opportunities for further professional development through participation in courses available in Education Centres or other venues. Skills, resources and expertise within the school is shared and developed through input at staff meetings.

Related Policies;

- **Child Protection Policy.**

- **Supervision.**
- **Anti-Bullying Policy.**
- **Pupils' Code of Conduct.**
- **Acceptable Use Policy.**
- **Bullying and Harassment Policy.**
- **Duty of Care Policy.**

Review and Evaluation:

The SPHE policy is never static and must be examined and evaluated yearly by the whole staff via a checklist and the Board of management. This evidence will It is to be adapted to the needs of the students and any incoming circulars or new legislation. SPHE programme and policy will be reviewed and evaluated when necessary by the teachers. Emphasis will be placed on the child protection element of the programme, particularly RSE and Stay Safe.