



St. Mac Dara's Community College

SPHE & RSE Policy 2022/2023

Saint Mac Dara's Ethos Statement

St. MacDara's Community College is a co-educational, multi-denominational school. Its positive ethos is reflected in the quality of the relationships between all its stakeholders. This collaborative approach is evident in the college's mission statement.

The Mission Statement

"We, the community of this college, through a caring and collective approach, aspire to provide a broad-based education for all, to foster respect and dignity and to promote a safe and just environment by positively encouraging all to realise their potential".

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.

SPHE aims

- To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence
- 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

With such support, students may be enabled to participate as active and responsible adults in the personal and social dimensions of society and to make responsible decisions that respect their own dignity and the dignity of others. There is a growing recognition the social, personal and health education offered to our students is as important as any other area of the curriculum.

JUNIOR CYCLE WELLBEING

SPHE is now part of Junior Cycle Wellbeing. SPHE provides opportunities for teaching and learning directly related to health and wellbeing. Through the use of experiential methodologies, including group work, SPHE aims to develop students' positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It also aims to build the student's capacity to develop and maintain healthy relationships. Through studying aspects of SPHE, students have time to focus on developing personal and social skills including self-management, communication, coping and problem-solving.

CLASS ORGANISATION AND TIMETABLING

Circular M11/03

All second level schools must timetable Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) as part of the Junior Cycle core curriculum from September 2003. The time allocation recommended is the equivalent of one class period per week.

Circular 0037/2010

All second level schools must implement Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as an element of Social Personal and Health Education at Junior Cycle, and as an RSE programme in Senior Cycle, even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class.

Circular 0015/2017

The new area of learning entitled Wellbeing will be introduced for First Years from September 2017. A key component of this area of learning is Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE).

Students receive SPHE classes in their dedicated class tutor groups and in the main, with their class tutor.

1st, 3rd and 4th year, are timetabled one class of SPHE a week. 2nd year has two classes of SPHE per week. RSE takes place for a minimum of 6 classes during the year in the SPHE class.

5th Year students are also allocated two class periods per week of SPHE (including RSE), while 6th Year students receive one class per week. Senior classes are timetabled concurrently and on a Monday. LCVP students receive 6 classes of RSE within the year. These dates are decided in consultation with the interested parties and ratified by the BOM.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Children with Special Educational 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.

For learning activities to be made meaningful, relevant and achievable for all students, it is important that the teacher finds ways to respond to students' diversity by using differentiated approaches and methodologies. In consultation with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator the following strategies will be adopted:

- Ensuring that objectives are realistic for the students and ensuring that the learning task is compatible with prior learning
- Providing opportunities for interacting and working with other students in small groups
- Spending more time on tasks and organising the learning task into small stages
- Ensuring that language used is pitched at the students' level of understanding and does not hinder understanding of the activity
- Using task analysis, outlining the steps to be learned/completed in any given task
- Posing key questions to guide students through the different stages/processes, and to assist in self-direction and correction
- Using graphic symbols as reminders to assist students in understanding the sequence/steps in any given task/problem
- Modelling task analysis by talking through the steps of a task as it is being done
- Having short and varied tasks
- Creating a learning environment through the use of concrete, and where possible every day, materials

- Displaying word lists and laminated charts with pictures

A booklist for teaching RSE to students with SEN is made available to parents and teachers if needed.

CONTENT AND TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

Through participation in the SPHE Programme the student will encounter a wide range of issues through a variety of learning experiences. The emphasis will be on building skills, understanding, attitudes and values important in all these areas.

The four strands of the Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course are:

- Who am I?
- Minding myself and others
- Team Up
- My Mental Health

The new Junior Cycle Framework is based on the following areas

- Managing Myself
- Staying Well
- Communicating
- Being Creative
- Working with Others
- Managing Information and Thinking

Senior SPHE Curriculum Framework

The curriculum framework for SPHE is built around five areas of learning

- Mental Health
- Gender Studies
- Substance Use
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Physical Activity and Nutrition

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:

- Group work
- Role play
- Brainstorming
- Icebreakers
- Simulation
- Narrative expression
- Debating
- Project work
- Art work
- Multi-media materials
- Case studies
- Visiting speakers

Event Weeks Include

- Random Acts of Kindness Week
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- LGBTQI Awareness Week
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- Anti-Racism Week

Awards

- Mind Your Buddy Award (Mental Health Awareness)

The Department of Education and Skills recognises that each school has flexibility to plan the SPHE programme in harmony with the students' needs and the school's resources.

St Mac Dara's recognises that the primary responsibility for the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of children lies with their parents. The school has a long tradition of supporting parents in this role and SPHE is seen as building on this.

CROSS CURRICULAR LINKS

The following subject areas form cross curricular links with the SPHE Programme:

- Physical Education
- CSPE
- Guidance Related Learning (Tutor Time)
- Science
- Home Economics
- Religious Education
- Tiered Student Leadership Programme (TY Peer Leaders, Mentors, Prefects)

RESOURCES AND ACCOMMODATION

A limited 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:

- SPHE Junior Certificate Syllabus and Guidelines
- Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines
- Health and Wellbeing 1,2 and 3
- On My Own Two Feet
- RSE Junior Cycle Materials
- RSE Senior Cycle Materials
- Before You Decide
- Trust
- HSE leaflets and DVDs
- Growing Up LGBT
- Belong To Stand Up Resources
- Mental Health Matters
- Emotional Health Materials
- Working Things Out
- Body Whys

- #Up To Us
- Lockers
- Marie Keating Cancer Awareness Pack
- JC Personal Safety Lessons
- SC Personal Safety Lessons

This list is not exhaustive.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUBJECT DEVELOPMENT

The value placed on SPHE by the school will be evident by the commitment on the part of management to developing a core of trained SPHE teachers preferably gender balanced and to appointing an SPHE co-ordinator. SPHE is enhanced when the appointment of teachers to the subject has been negotiated in advance of timetabling.

In-career development is an integral part of this programme. Management is responsible for responding to the relevant expressed and perceived training needs of SPHE teachers and whole staff.

The SPHE Co-ordinator is Audrey Delaney. The Senior SPHE team are Niamh Butler, Rebecca Whelan and Christian Kelly.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND REFERRALS

PARTICIPATION

SPHE is a core curricular subject. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes but parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home, this is only when all avenues have been exhausted. The school will respect this choice as their right. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with school management for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents must meet with the Principal in person to discuss their decision to withdraw their child from the RSE module.

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 Guidance Counsellor, Student Support Team, and/or the Principal.

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. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student. The teacher may inform the class of external services relevant to the class material. Help seeking is promoted in St Mac Dara's and helpful websites are displayed on the board and are located in school journals. SPHE teachers where in doubt as to a course of action, are to discuss the issue with the Guidance Counsellor, Student Support Team, and/or the Principal.

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 Safeguarding Statement and the revised Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017.

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.

VISITORS

Circular 0023/2010

National and international research has consistently shown that the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that he/she can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education.

Research findings indicate that the following teaching approaches have limited effect and are counterproductive to the effective implementation of SPHE:

- Scare tactics and sensationalist interventions
- Testimonials
- Information only interventions
- Short term/once off interventions
- Outside speakers can be a resource when used as part of a school's planned programme for SPHE/RSE

Visiting speakers are seen as complimenting and supporting the SPHE programme. Teachers inviting these speakers must:

- Inform the Principal in advance
- Make the speaker aware of the ethos and SPHE Policy of the school
- Agree the content of the presentation
- Do preparatory and follow up work where possible
- Remain with the class group during the visit

PARENTS

The school accepts that it is in the interests of all parents that the child grows up in a healthy and mature fashion. The school will strive to keep parents informed of the contents of the SPHE programme and resources available for parents. An overview of SPHE, RSE information and any relevant updates are given to Parents at the Year Head Parent Information Evenings. The SPHE Policy is available on the school website and on request at the school. Notifications regarding reviews are also available on the school website. Parents of incoming first years are informed of the availability of the SPHE Policy along with other relevant policies on the school website.

The involvement of parents at the core of every aspect of SPHE gives it extra impetus, depth and validity and from time to time training and/or input and development opportunities will be offered to parents in certain aspects of SPHE.

WHOLE STAFF

This policy will be available for all staff in the school by its inclusion with the Policy Documents, which are kept in the Principal's office. Copies will be given to each SPHE teacher by the SPHE co-ordinator.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Restorative practice is used as a way to resolve conflict, no matter how small. All positive behaviour is recorded in our vsware.

LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Key words are introduced at the beginning of the class, along with learning intentions. Numeracy is also frequently used when gathering data for bar charts etc.

ASSESSMENT, RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING

Every student, both Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle, has a SPHE Workbook/Portfolio folder that is kept in the classroom. The folder contains work sheets, hand outs and a journal. At the end of a lesson students record a short reflection in their journal. The folders are given to students at the end of Junior Cycle and the end of Senior Cycle.

SPHE teachers report progress in SPHE for Junior Cycle students on the Christmas and Summer reports. The SPHE team meet at least once a term, subject to current restrictions, to review, plan and evaluate SPHE in the school. Minutes of all meetings are recorded and contained in the SPHE online folder.

WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR SPHE

While specific teachers are trained and charged with the responsibility of delivering the programme, we see every teacher as a teacher of SPHE in that he/she may from time to time see opportunities to promote healthy lifestyle

and encourage responsible and mature decision making. There is generally a whole school approach to key areas of SPHE and the school year has times earmarked when certain topics or issues are covered e.g. Anti-Bullying/Random Acts of Kindness Week, Healthy Lifestyles Week and Healthy Minds Week.

RELATED POLICIES

- RSE Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Drug and Substance Use Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Inclusion Policy to include Diversity and Educational Needs
- LGBTQI Policy
- School Litter Policy

REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The SPHE course is never static and must be examined and evaluated regularly and adapted to the needs of the students. The SPHE programme and policy will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis by the SPHE team.

The opinions of students will be included and SPHE teachers will liaise with the Student Council. The opinions of parents will also be included and SPHE teachers will liaise with the Parents Association. The opinions of management will be included and the SPHE co-ordinator will liaise with the Principal and the Board of Management.

RATIFIED BY BOM – JANUARY 2023

POLICY EFFECTIVE – JANUARY 2023

SIGNED Derek Ward (PRINCIPAL)

SIGNED Pamela Keen (CHAIRPERSON)

DATE 6/12/2022

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APPENDIX A

Summary of what St. Mac Dara's provides both formally and informally to promote the holistic development of students:

COURSES

Junior Certificate

Transition Year

Leaving Certificate

SUPPORTS

Tutor Year/Head

Guidance Counsellors

Pastoral Care/Student Support Team/Care Team

School Chaplain

Library

Special Needs Assistants

Learning Support

Parents Association

Student Council

Tiered Leadership Programme – TY Peer Leaders, Mentors, Prefects

After School Study

D&D Club

OMG (Open Minded Group)

English Debating Club

Geography Rocks

History Association

Science Club

Trocaire

Ukulele Club

Tours

School Field Trips

School Activity Trips

Subject Prize Giving

Website Team

SPORTS

Gaelic Football

Hurling

Soccer

Basketball

Rugby

Camogie

Athletics