

Social, Personal and Health Education School Policy

Rice College Ennis

Introduction

In Junior Cycle, six indicators – Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware – have been identified as central to students` wellbeing. Learning in SPHE provides learning opportunities designed to enhance each of these indicators thereby contributing significantly to the school`s Wellbeing programme in junior cycle.

The staff of Rice College acknowledge the Children First Act 2015, and Circular 0081/2017 from The Department of Education and Science, and strive to deal with all matters of child protection “sensitively and professionally”, and in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Statement. The requirements of this statement have been met – all staff have completed Children First Training courses facilitated by Tusla and the PDST.

The Designated Liaison Person is Mr. Louis Mulqueen (Principal)

The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is Mr. John Burns (Deputy Principal)

Mission Statement

We are a caring school. We strive to live up to Christian values and show genuine concern for our school community. Our core aims are to provide a broad and comprehensive education and to recognise the needs and develop the talents of each person. We strive to enrich all those with whom we are privileged to come in contact with – we strive to succeed.

The Aims of SPHE

“To develop students` positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It also aims to build the capacity of young people to develop and maintain healthy relationships.” (SPHE Specification for Junior Cycle, June 2014)

“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 students` 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.” (Draft Guidelines on Wellbeing in Junior Cycle, 2016)

How SPHE links with the school

SPHE will provide young people with skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and about the way they live their lives. While the school acknowledges that the home is the natural environment for the social, personal and health development of children, the school will endeavour to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. This will happen in consultation with their parents and in the context of the Catholic ethos of the school. Particular policies will inform the teaching of SPHE in a more specific way. These include the Substance Use Policy, Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy, Healthy Eating Policy, Child Protection Guidelines and the Wellbeing Policy. A summary of what the school currently provides for the general wellbeing of students, both formally and informally, to support SPHE is included in Appendix 1. SPHE is seen to build on this existing commitment to the care and development of students within the school.

Outline of the Programme Content

The SPHE curriculum is modular and spiral in nature. The existing SPHE programme (2006) contains ten modules, each of which appears in each year of the three year Junior Cycle. The modules are Belonging and Integrating; Self Management and Sense of Purpose; Communication Skills; Physical Health; Friendship; Relationships and Sexuality; Emotional Health; Influences and Decisions; Substance Abuse and Personal Safety. The Short Course specification (2014) contains four strands. These are: Who Am I?; Minding Myself and Others; Team Up and My Mental Health. Students will have the opportunities to revisit these different themes throughout first, second and third year. Students can study SPHE using either of the above two approaches. The Department of Education and Science recognises that each school has flexibility to plan the SPHE programme most suitable for the students and the school.

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods will be child-centered and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student. The class atmosphere must be one of respect for the privacy of each individual student and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. The Experiential Learning Cycle is the basis around which class activities are structured. Students are encouraged to work from their personal base of experience and knowledge and build on this throughout their work in SPHE. The four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle are: Experiencing; Processing; Generalising and Applying. A wide range of active and experiential learning methodologies will be used, some of which will include Think, Pair, Share, group work, debates, discussion and opportunities for personal reflection. Assessment will be conducted in many forms and will be aimed at improving written and oral literacy skills.

How SPHE will be timetabled and taught

The minimum threshold of time for SPHE is 70 hours, spread across first, second and third year. (Circular Letter 0015/2017). Accordingly SPHE will be timetabled for one class period per week for first, second and third year students. It will be taught in the context of the ERST ethos and the mission statement of the school.

Staff Training and Support

The Board of Management will endeavour to provide the necessary human and material resources to support the programme on an ongoing basis. The role of the SPHE co-ordinator is seen as vital to a meaningful SPHE programme. School management will encourage and facilitate teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of the SPHE programme. It may not be appropriate to deal with some explicit questions in class. Teachers may choose to say it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher may consider the age and readiness of the students, the SPHE and RSE programme content, the ethos of the school and the RSE policy.

Parent Support and Concern

Parents are the primary educators of their children and their role in education is seen by the school as very important. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from any, or all of the RSE classes. Such a request should be made in writing to the school Principal. However we would urge parents to reflect on the wisdom of this course of action, as the school cannot take responsibility for information subsequently passed on to pupils by classmates. This SPHE policy has been designed in consultation with Parents Association representatives, and the views expressed by parents are taken into account. A copy of this policy is available on the school website. Students will be consulted on the policy through a meeting of the students` council. While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart SPHE course content, the needs of the students will be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate the school may refer students to other supportive links or services, internal or external to the school community eg Pastoral Care team etc. Class discussion will be of a general nature in accordance with the previously agreed ground rules and will not be personally directed.

Visiting Speakers

The DES circular 0043/2018 acknowledges that “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 behaviours in all aspects of health education.”

However visiting speakers can enhance the learning experience, and the SPHE co-ordinator will consult with the Principal prior to their invitation to the school. All guest speakers will be made aware of, and requested to comply with the school SPHE policy. Visitors should be given advance notice of the composition of the class and an idea of how their contribution fits into the scheme of work. The presentations of guest speakers will be negotiated with SPHE staff before delivery to students. It is normal practice for teachers to remain in the classroom while visitors are there. Preparatory and follow up work where possible should be undertaken by the class. Guest speakers should be welcomed at the main door and returned to same after their visit.

Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the SPHE programme

We are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of this SPHE programme. Specifically important is feedback from parents, staff and students. The SPHE policy will be reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis by school management and the SPHE team.

Confidentiality

The Child Protection Guidelines for Post Primary schools state in 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.

- “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 the 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 should be borne in mind. The supports of the school should continue to be made available to the child”
- “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”

Reports of all investigations will be compiled in the strictest and in accordance with Data Protection 2018 Guidelines.

The above guideline will form part of SPHE policy, as will the following

- Teachers must not promise absolute confidentiality to a child
- Pupils 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 interests of the pupil to do so
- Teachers will use their professional judgement to decide whether confidence can be maintained having heard the information
- Teachers will indicate to pupils when the content of a conversation can no longer be kept confidential – the pupil can then decide whether to proceed or not

Appendix 1

Below is a summary of what our school currently provides for the general wellbeing of students, both formally and informally, to support SPHE policy.

- School Policies (Admission, Discipline, Anti-Bullying, Substance Use, Health and Safety, Healthy Eating)
- Pastoral Care team
- Year Heads
- Parents and Students` Council
- Class Representatives
- After school study
- Sports and Games
- Career Guidance
- Guest Speakers
- Study Skills
- Open Night for parents
- Enterprises
- Mentoring System
- Subject Fieldtrips
- School Concerts
- School Masses
- Student Retreats
- Charity Work
- Transition Year Activities
- Parent Teacher Meetings