

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy

Rationale for SPHE

Early adolescence is a time of significant change for young people, physically, emotionally and socially. Through the use of experiential methodologies and group work, students have the dedicated space and time in this short course to develop their understanding and skills to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing in a rapidly changing world.

In SPHE, students have opportunities to revisit different themes which focus on developing self-awareness and respect for others, and the skills of self-management, communication, coping, decision-making and relating to others. This spiral approach of revisiting key ideas and topics is familiar from existing approaches to SPHE. This new course builds on this approach but also emphasises the importance of student agency and engagement in the learning process as key to learning in the affective domain. The skills involved are vital for self-fulfilment, for living in communities and for full engagement in learning beyond SPHE. Personal reflection, resilience and empathy are also promoted through SPHE. Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is important for young people at this stage of their lives. They are exposed to a lot of information about relationships and sex from informal sources, the media and online. SPHE provides the context within which young people can learn about important physical, social, emotional and moral issues around relationships, sexual health, sexuality and gender identity, including where to get reliable information from trusted sources.

It is important to build on students' learning in SPHE in primary education also. Learning in SPHE is essentially supported by a positive, empowering whole school environment and relevant school policies/guidelines including RSE, anti-bullying and substance-use policies, and child protection guidelines. This broader context for learning in SPHE helps to ensure that students learn to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. These decisions are further supported and encouraged by school, community and national policies and guidelines.

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.

Aims of SPHE

This short course aims 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.

Links to ethos

Newpark Comprehensive School operates on the philosophy that each student "is encouraged to reach their own potential, to develop their skills and abilities to the maximum degree possible and hopefully become active participative citizens and lifelong learners after school". Newpark aims to develop a broad and inclusive range of aptitudes in each student, to

develop the self-worth, self-esteem and self-confidence of each student and to provide a supportive and caring environment.

The School SPHE Policy reflects this philosophy. The enhancement of self-esteem and life skills and the development of potential – academic, personal and emotional – leading to greater autonomy for all students are its central goals.

Whole school approach

The processes of all teaching and learning have implications for personal and social development. The ways in which members of the staff relate to one another and to the students, and the quality of relationships between the students themselves, form the foundation for personal and social development in a school. Therefore, every teacher and staff member, every class and extracurricular activity has offered and continues to offer opportunities for enhancing the personal and social development of the student. A supportive school environment ensures that the values of SPHE are lived out in the whole school community.

In such environments:

- People feel valued
- Self-esteem is fostered
- Fairness and tolerance are evident
- High expectations are the norm
- Those having difficulties are supported
- Communication is open
- Effort is recognised
- Difference is valued
- Conflict is handled constructively
- Initiative and creativity are stressed
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted

The principles of respect and tolerance must permeate the whole school climate; they cannot be compartmentalised into SPHE. The development of an appreciation for learning, respect and caring for self and others, a sense of belonging and a sense of social responsibility – these are tasks of the whole school community.

SPHE is a central part of wellbeing and the curriculum.

Timetabling

Current provision of SPHE/RSE in Newpark school

1st year – one hour per week (full year)

2nd year – one hour per week (full year)

3rd year – one hour per week (half year)

Class grouping

The school management should ensure that class sizes are appropriate to the subject; no more than 24 students.

Course Guidelines

The curriculum for SPHE in the junior cycle is laid out to follow the four strands of SPHE.

The four strands are:

Strand 1: Who Am I

Strand 2: Minding Myself and Others
Strand 3: Team Up
Strand 4: My Mental Health

The six indicators of learning are also central to the schools SPHE programme.

Guidance education is included in the SPHE curriculum in 1st, 2nd and 3rd year. SPHE teachers work with the guidance counsellor in relation to guidance education.

Underpinning the work with students is an understanding that they become agents of their own learning and are active rather than passive participants. We involve students in a “Cycle of Experiential Learning” which allows them to work in a way that is student-centred and participative.

The first, second and third year subject plans can be viewed in the SPHE department folder, on OneDrive or obtained from SPHE teachers.

Intervention workshops can be incorporated into the school year where they are seen to be pertinent to the needs of a group or year cohort.

Staff training

Staff training is ongoing in the form of ‘in-service’ training provided by the department of Education and Skills and members of our staff. Teachers assigned to SPHE must have an understanding of, and a familiarity with, the methodologies associated with education in this area. SPHE should not be assigned to teachers without consultation. Those involved in the SPHE programme in a school will need continuing support from their colleagues, from the Principal and Board of Management, and from a range of other agencies that are in a position to offer in-career support.

Home-School links and SPHE

Using links such as the PTA, pre-entry meetings before a student enters the school and the school website, parents can be informed of the SPHE programme. Parents will be informed, by letter, when the RSE module is taking place.

Assessment and evaluation

Learning in SPHE has to do with the acquisition of knowledge but more importantly it is concerned with developing students’ attitudes, values and feelings. Much of this is personal to the student and this privacy needs to be respected. Most of the assessment is on an ongoing basis as students engage in different learning activities such as discussing, explaining, giving/receiving feedback, researching, presenting, planning and taking action. Students also

have a reflective journal to allow them to reflect upon their own learning. These all make an important contribution to students' Assessment for Learning.

One Classroom-Based Assessment will be completed during third year. It will be based on learning outcomes in more than one strand of the course.

Roles and responsibilities

The school management team are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented.

The SPHE co-ordinator will have a role in monitoring aspects of the policy.

Review date 2022

Jan 2020

Chairperson, BOM _____ Date _____

Secretary, BOM _____ Date _____