

St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, Co. Clare

SPHE Policy

Definition of Social, Personal and Health Education, its aim and how it links with school ethos.

S.P.H.E is a programme that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, spiritual and social development.

The Aims of S.P.H.E:

Building on the aims of S.P.H.E in the primary school, at post-primary level S.P.H.E aims:

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

How S.P.H.E links with the School Ethos

We see these aims as contributing towards the school's commitment to nurturing the Christian values of respect, justice and integrity in all aspects of school life and to fostering the holistic development of the students in our care. The school recognises that the home is the natural environment where children grow, develop and mature into adults. However, it also accepts (as stated in paragraph 9 sub section of the education Act 1998) its own role in supporting parents in this work and in fostering the social, moral, spiritual and personal development of the students in our care. Our commitment to the development of the general well being of the student community is evident in the many examples of activities and support structures (Appendix 1) we provide (both formally and informally). S.P.H.E is seen to build on this commitment.

Outline of the Programme Content

The curriculum for S.P.H.E is presented in ten modules, each of which appears in each year of the three year Junior cycle. The emphasis in our programme is in developing skills, understanding, attitudes and values important to all these areas.

The Ten Modules are:

- Belonging and Integrating
- Self-management: a sense of purpose
- Communication skills
- Physical health
- Friendship
- Relationships & sexuality
- Emotional health
- Influences and decisions
- Substance use
- Personal safety

The Department of Education and Science recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the S.P.H.E programme most suitable for the students and the school

Teaching Methods:

As the S.P.H.E programme is primarily skills based, teaching methods are experiential in nature with an emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods are child centred and are appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student. The class atmosphere is one of respect for the privacy of each individual student and is hallmarked by sensitivity and care. Active learning is facilitated through the effective use of various methodologies including group work, pair work, role play, worksheet activities etc.

How S.P.H.E is timetabled and taught:

S.P.H.E is timetabled for one class period a week for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students, the programme was initiated in September 2003. It is taught in the context of the comprehensive ethos and the mission statement of the school. Every effort is made to ensure that the teachers retain their class group from 1st year through to 3rd year, thus establishing a safe and secure learning environment and facilitating optimal learning in SPHE. Teachers are assigned to the teaching team by consultation and through expressions of interest.

Staff development, training and resource issues:

The Board of Management provides the necessary human and material resources to support the programme on an ongoing basis. A resource area was provided, easily accessible to the entire teaching team. School management encourages and facilitates teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of the S.P.H.E programme. Information from each in-service course attended is placed in the S.P.H.E resource folder and is therefore available to each team member. Several members of the team have attended specialised training in areas that include: Mental Health, Bereavement, Suicide, Bullying, Peer Ministry etc. The teaching team includes the Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor where possible and several class teachers. The team share their information, experience and resources freely. School management is very supportive of any requests made to update the resources and equipment for S.P.H.E. Resources are allocated on the basis of teacher/co-ordinator requisition

Cross Curricular Links:

The team recognise the importance of linking with other subjects in planning and delivering the S.P.H.E programme. Most effective to date had been the link with R.E. when covering the R.S.E module.

Participation/Sensitive Issues/Confidentiality**Participation:**

S.P.H.E is a core curricular subject on the junior cycle curriculum. Relationships and sexuality (R.S.E) is one module of the programme. Each parent has a right to withdraw their child from RSE. Parents of any student opting out of R.S.E must make suitable arrangements with school management for the welfare of their child at these times.

Sensitive Issues:

When imparting the S.P.H.E course content, teachers strive to address the needs of the students in a caring and supportive manner. Class discussions are of a general nature and are not personally directed, in accordance with our previously agreed ground rules and class contracts. If individual issues emerge, they are referred on by the teacher to the appropriate person(s) or supportive link or service, internal or external to the school community e.g. chaplain, pastoral care team etc. The S.P.H.E teacher acts as a facilitator and not a counsellor.

Confidentiality:

The normal limits of confidentiality apply to any information coming to the attention of the teacher. However every effort will be made to ensure that this information is dealt with in a sensitive and discreet manner.

The Role of Visitors:

Visitors to S.P.H.E classes will deal with discussions in line with the aims of the programme and the Ethos of the school. It is the duty of the teacher who organises the visit to ensure the suitability of the visit to the programme and the school. Teachers will remain with the class for the duration of the visit. Principal must be informed in advance of all visiting speakers and the content of their presentation.

How Parents/Guardians are informed:

- P.T. meetings.
- Teachers provide comments on Christmas and summer reports.
- E Portal
- Newsletter
- A full and complete syllabus, core resource material and the policy document is available in the school if parents/guardians wish to view it.
- Parents/guardians who require further information may contact the S.P.H.E co-ordinator in the school.

How Teachers are informed:

All teaching staff have been provided with a copy of the school policy and an explanatory leaflet of the S.P.H.E programme. The Department of Education and Science will make them aware of any substantial changes to the programme, through the usual channels. Teachers delivering the S.P.H.E programme are afforded the opportunity for a deeper exploration of all the issues in meetings with the S.P.H.E coordinator. All new S.P.H.E teachers are provided with an S.P.H.E booklet and teaching materials by the co-ordinator. Teachers meet to plan informally at lunch times. In addition to meetings and informal contact, communication is maintained with the S.P.H.E team via memos. Students are informed of the policy through the Students Council and their parents.

Assessment:

Students' achievements in S.P.H.E are recognised and acknowledged and feedback on students' progress is given to parents at Parent/Teacher meetings and in reports. Each teacher maintains a comprehensive record of students' attendance and of work completed.

Evaluation and Review:

The S.P.H.E policy will be reviewed every two years by a group composed of the S.P.H.E co-ordinator, representatives of the Board of Management, Students Council, Parents Association and the S.P.H.E teachers. The S.P.H.E team has shown flexibility as it meets the changing needs of the students and the needs of the school.

Policies:

A number of other relevant whole-school policies to support the personal and social development of students are in place in St. Patrick's Comprehensive School.

Pastoral Care and Supports:

The strong focus of pastoral care in St. Patrick's Comprehensive is symbolised by a wide range of supports for students that includes:

- Year Heads,
- Class Teachers,
- Student Council,
- Mentoring Programme,
- Guidance,
- Chaplain,
- Parents Association etc.

All these supports facilitate the provision of a cohesive and holistic personal and social development programme for all students in the school.

Appendix 1

Below is a summary of what our school currently provides for the general well-being of students, both formally and informally to support S.P.H.E.

Policies include the following: Admission, Discipline, Anti-Bullying, Substance Use, Health and Safety, Attendance.

- Pastoral Care Team
- Class Tutors,
- Year Heads
- Breakfast Club
- Parents Association
- After School Study
- Sports and Games
- Career Guidance
- Outside Speakers
- Study Skills
- Open Nights for Parents (Guidance night, RSE information night)
- Subject Fieldtrips
- Drama Productions
- School Masses, including Christmas and Easter Ceremonies etc.
- Supporting Charities including Trocaire 'Shoe-box appeal', Concern, Bothar, Daffodil Day, Jump for Joy, Crumlin Children's Hospital.
- Cross Curricular Links including Religion, Health Education, Science, C.S.P.E., Home Economics,
- Guidance.
- Transition Year
- Parent Teacher Meetings
- School Bank
- Gaisce
- Public Speaking
- Music
- Library
- Shop
- Enterprise Education
- Special Needs Assistants
- Resource/Learning Support