St Kilian's Community School Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy (2024/25)

Introductory Statement

St.Kilian's Community School's SPHE Policy is a structured document that describes the school SPHE Programme. It is an integral part of the school's overall development plan.

Link to Mission Statement

St. Kilian's C.S operates on the philosophy that each student deserves "the best possible quality of education … regardless of their ability or social and economic background." The school strives to nurture a wide range of aptitudes, boost each student's self-worth, self-esteem, and self-confidence, and offer a supportive and caring environment.

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

Rationale

Early adolescence is a time of significant physical, emotional and social change. Through experiential learning and group activities, SPHE provides students with space to develop self-awareness, self-care, decision-making, and social skills essential for their health and wellbeing in a rapidly evolving world.

This course adopts a spiral approach, revisiting key themes, while emphasising student engagement and agency as crucial for learning. These skills are foundational for personal growth, community living and broader learning.

The course includes Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), helping students navigate information about relationships, sexual health and gender identity, while

promoting informed decision-making using reliable sources. SPHE builds on prior learning from primary education and is supported by a positive school environment and policies on RSE, anti-bullying, substance use, acceptable usage and child protection.

In Junior Cycle, SPHE enhances the six wellbeing indicators, It plays a vital role in fostering resilience, empathy, and informed choices, contributing significantly to the school's Wellbeing programme.

The Aims of SPHE

The SPHE programme aims 'to build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth; to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives; empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society' (SPHE Specification for Junior Cycle, 2023).

'SPHE provides opportunities for teaching and learning directly related to health and wellbeing. Through the use of experimental 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.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an integral part of the Wellbeing programme. It facilitates teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of relationships and sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to develop self-awareness and self-esteem, realise their health, wellbeing and dignity; develop positive and respectful, social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own wellbeing and that of others; and, understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to themselves and others' (Guidelines on Wellbeing in Junior Cycle 2021).

Whole-school Approach

Teaching and learning inherently impact personal and social development. Positive relationships among staff and students, as well as interactions within and beyond the classroom, create opportunities to foster growth. A supportive school environment ensures the values of SPHE are embedded throughout the community.

Such an environment promotes:

- Valuing individuals and fostering self-esteem
- Fairness, tolerance, and high expectations
- Support for those facing challenges
- Open communication, recognition of effort, and appreciation of diversity
- Constructive conflict resolution and encouragement of initiative and creativity
- Social, moral and civic values

Respect and tolerance must permeate the entire school culture, promoting learning, self-care, social responsibility and belonging as shared responsibilities. SPHE is integral to wellbeing and the broader curriculum.

Timetabling

Current provision of SPHE in St. Kilian's Community School:

1st Year	80 mins per week
2nd Year	80 mins per week
3rd Year	40 mins per week
Transition Year	40 mins per week
Senior Cycle	8 hours of RSE*

*1 hour of SPHE per week required at Senior Cycle by September 2027. 1 hour of SPHE per week required for all Leaving Certificate Applied students from September 2025, as part of the Social Education module.

Course Outline

The curriculum for SPHE in the Junior Cycle is laid out to follow the four strands of SPHE. The four strands are:

- Strand 1: Understanding Myself and Others
- Strand 2: Making Healthy Choices
- Strand 3: Relationships and Sexuality
- Strand 4: Emotional Wellbeing

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

- ***Active***
  Being physically active is an important element in staying well.

- ***Responsible***
  Each person must take responsibility for their own choices and make decisions, which promote their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.

- ***Connected***
  It is important to feel connected and also to appreciate that actions and interactions taken by one person will impact on their wellbeing and that of others.

- ***Resilient***
  Everyone goes through challenges in their life. By building resilience, students learn the skills to cope with life's challenges.

- ***Respected***
  Feeling respected, listened to and valued are key aspects of wellbeing. Positive, respectful relationships are central to maintaining wellbeing.

- ***Aware***
  Self-awareness is important for wellbeing, being able to make sense of thoughts, feelings and behaviours and being aware of personal values and personal limitations.



(Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, NCCA, 2021)

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.

Central to the approach is the belief that students are active participants in their own learning. Using experiential learning, the programme promotes a student-centred, participative learning process. Subject plans for these year groups are available through the SPHE department. Additionally, workshops may be integrated into the school year to address specific needs of a group or cohort.

The textbooks used at Junior Cycle are:

- 1st Year 'Health and Wellbeing SPHE 1'
- 2nd Year 'Health and Wellbeing SPHE 2'
- 3rd Year 'Health and Wellbeing SPHE 3'

The following units make up the delivery of SPHE at Junior Cycle:

Unit 1: A Balanced Lifestyle

- Transitions
- Self- Management
- Being Independent

Unit 2: Relationships and Me

- Friendships and Relationships
- Respectful Communication
- Self-Talk and Self Esteem
- Being Different: Diversity
- Being Adolescent

Unit 3: A Healthy Lifestyle

- Making Healthy Choices
- Unhealthy Products (substance use)
- Hygiene
- The Online World

Unit 4: Changes and Choices

- Power, privilege and equality
- Healthy and Unhealthy relationships
- Identity
- Reproductive/Sexual Health and Wellbeing

Unit 5: Exploring Emotional Wellbeing

- Self-care
- Anti-Bullying
- Managing stress

Assessment

SPHE focuses on acquiring knowledge while prioritising the development of students' attitudes, values and emotions, respecting their privacy. Assessment is primarily ongoing, involving activities like discussions, feedback, research, presentations, all contributing to Assessment for Learning.

Students will keep an ongoing reflective journal to allow them to reflect upon their own learning.

Students will keep a portfolio of work. This will be added to during assessment weeks.

In third year, students complete one Classroom-Based Assessment, encompassing learning outcomes from multiple strands of the course.

Staff Training

Staff training for SPHE and RSE is ongoing, with in-service sessions offered by Oide and supported by school management. Teachers assigned to SPHE should be well-versed in its methodologies, with their assignment made through consultation.

The Board of Management is committed to providing the necessary resources, both human and material, to sustain the SPHE programme. The role of the SPHE coordinator is critical to its success, ensuring the programme remains meaningful and impactful. Further training modules on topics such as physical and mental health are available, alongside professional development courses, with details regularly shared with teachers via email. Continued collaboration and support from colleagues, management, and external agencies further enhance the programme’s effectiveness.

Home-school Links

Parents can learn about the SPHE programme through channels such as the PTA, pre-entry meetings, parent-student-teacher meetings and the school website. They will also receive a letter notifying of procedures relating to RSE. Full curricular details are available online at https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/2780c6c6-993c-46fb-8ba6-b647188337c9/JC-SPHE-Short-Course-2023-EV-FINAL.pdf.

Evaluation & Review

This SPHE policy has been drafted by the SPHE department. It will be reviewed after two Years following the reformation of the Senior Cycle. The evaluation of the SPHE programme will take place annually and will include students, teachers and the principal.