

# **Policy on Social Personal and Health Education**

**“Our school is a learning Community based on faith, hope and love, where respect, responsibility and Christian commitment grow, allowing all our students to prepare for a meaningful life.”**

## **1. Rationale:**

Our vision of education gives priority to the integration of the spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical and emotional development of the individual student. The work of the school is not an enterprise conducted in isolation but is very much influenced by the cultural and social mores of the time. The school is therefore challenged to address the cultural reality in which the students live and must aim to equip students with the skills necessary to cope in a world that is challenging and presents choices all the time.

In Our Lady of Lourdes, we hope to develop persons who feel confident in responding to such choices. Such young people are responsible and inner directed and choose freely in response to an informed conscience.

The SPHE programme in this school takes place within a Christian understanding of human development and sexuality and recognises the dignity of the individual. The programme addresses contemporary topics which are dealt with at a level appropriate to the age of the student and within a moral framework in keeping with the characteristic spirit of the school.

## **(A) Social Personal and Health Education**

### **2. Aims:**

The subject aims to nurture students who are physically healthy, have good social skills and good mental health. This is achieved through a structured, cyclical programme in accordance with the D.E.S. guidelines and the characteristic spirit of the school.

### **3. Subject Objectives:**

- To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and the 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.

#### **4. Class Organisation and Timetabling:**

SPHE is allocated one class period per week for all Junior Cycle students. Classes are organised in mixed ability groupings.

An SPHE programme takes place as part of Religious Education in Transition Year, Fifth and Sixth Year, and also through the Young Social Innovators Programme in T. Y, which reaches all students in the school.

In organising the learning environment, the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats each student with sensitivity and care. Active learning methods are used to ensure that students actively participate in their own learning.

Each student has an SPHE workbook or copybook in which all classwork and homework is completed.

Contemporary topics and issues which emerge in this class are dealt with at a level appropriate to the age of the student and within a moral framework, in keeping with the school ethos.

#### **5. Planning for students with special needs:**

Links are made, where necessary with resource staff in connection with the SPHE/RSE programme.

#### **6. Content and teaching methods:**

SPHE comprises ten modules. These are re-visited each year as the students mature and their needs and abilities change. The emphasis is on building life skills and developing attitudes and values in relation to the areas explored.

Ten modules of SPHE:

- Belonging and Integrating
- Self Management
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendship
- Relationships and Sexuality (RSE)
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions

- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

Methodologies:

- Group Discussions
- Case Studies
- Brainstorming
- Role Play
- Artwork
- Narrative Expression
- Games – Icebreakers
- Games – Simulation
- Debates
- Project Work.

**7. Confidentiality:**

At the beginning of each academic year, students are informed that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Information may have to be passed on at the discretion of the SPHE teacher to the D.L.P. or to the Student Support Team.

**8. Resources and accommodation for SPHE:**

A wide range of resources can be found in the SPHE Resource Press located in a central area easily accessible to all SPHE teachers.

Resources are updated every year.

An appropriate budget is made available by school management each year to cover the cost of the department's requirements. This is negotiated on an annual basis according to the varying needs of the department.

**9. Cross-curricular links:**

Links are made with the following departments:

- Home Economics re healthy living
- Religion re RSE
- Biology re RSE
- Art re posters to highlight issues, e.g. substance abuse
- Physical Education
- Student Support Team
- Guidance – decision making, choices
- CSPE-citizenship,community etc

## **10. Staff development and subject development**

SPHE staff members engage in professional development on an ongoing basis. The SPHE team avails of the inservice training continuously on offer by the SPHE support service. A record of courses attended can be found in the SPHE Department folder. The above training ensures that teachers become familiar and comfortable with all aspects of the syllabus.

## **11. Visitors:**

While visitors to the classroom can be a useful addition to SPHE, the delivery of the programme remains the responsibility of the teacher.

## **12. Parents:**

The school acknowledges the role of parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children. The programme seeks to support parents in this challenging task.

Parents are introduced to, and familiarised with SPHE/RSE programme and methodologies at the annual Parent Teacher meetings. Parents are given an overview of the syllabus and questions can be clarified.

## **13. Assessment, record keeping and reporting:**

Written work and general class participation is used by the teacher to assess student engagement within the programme.

Regular department meetings take place and a record is kept of each meeting (see SPHE file).

Discussion and consultation takes place with school management when appropriate.

#### **14. Whole school support for SPHE:**

**Our Lady of Lourdes, Rosbercon** is a health promoting school which supports the ideals of the SPHE programme. Some examples of this are:

- Sports programmes and fitness lessons are engaged in by a large number of students.
- Student support is a priority in Our Lady of Lourdes, Rosbercon
- Our Meitheal Programme
- Our Senior Prefect system
- Anti-Bullying action weeks

### **(B) RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION PROGRAMME (RSE)**

#### **1. Why do we need the RSE programme?**

Our students live in a world of many influences. From a young age, they are bombarded with conflicting value systems, each claiming to offer fulfilment and happiness. Fundamental values concerning relationships and sexuality in particular, are no longer as clear to our young people as they once were. There are many reasons for this lack of clarity. Research has indicated some possible explanations.

- Children receive informal and unsupervised information about relationships and sexuality.
- Such information may be inadequate and inappropriate.
- Young people are already exposed to a variety of sexual practices and attitudes through the media, particularly TV, film and magazines.
- In magazines, in particular, young people find a diet of instant romance and immediate gratification.
- Children are maturing physically at a younger age.
- The roles of women and men in society are changing.

- Young people are becoming sexually active at an earlier age than in the past.
- The nature of family life is changing in a way that places many pressures on children and young people.

RSE provides an organised, yet informal, student-friendly way of responding to the above challenges.

## **2. RSE – Aims:**

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) which is located in the overall framework of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), has as its specific aims:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality.
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationship with others.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction.
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

## **3. RSE – Objectives:**

RSE should enable the students to:

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships.
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self esteem.
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals.
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted diseases.
- Understand sexual development and identity, and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality.
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood.
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others.
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

#### **4. RSE Programme content:**

Teachers will use materials deemed suitable and appropriate for students' needs and in accordance with school ethos.

Programme content falls under three headings:

#### **Human Growth and Development**

This consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationship and sexual activity.

#### **Human Sexuality**

Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. In this section, students are encouraged to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well-being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well-being of society.

#### **Human Relationships**

This section focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to self and others, stressing the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It addresses issues such as communication, influences, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and mental integrity.

#### **5. Students:**

The dignity and privacy of students is to be respected at all times. Students will not be asked to participate in any class activity, e.g. role play, or to respond to any questions that they do not feel comfortable with.

#### **6. Time allocation:**

Out of the SPHE programme in operation in the school, five to six timetabled periods in the year are assigned to RSE. The RSE programme takes place within the wider SPHE syllabus and is supported by the different themes/issues explored there.

**EVALUATION:**

The SPHE/RSE programmes are evaluated each year keeping in mind the changing cultural context. Students, parents and teachers are consulted in any evaluation.