

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



"Live as free people"

## **St Peter's Community School**

Approved November 2017

## **Introduction**

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a core part of the Pastoral Care Strategy of the school. The general aim of all education is to contribute towards the development of all aspects of the individual. Commitment to SPHE arises out of this holistic aim and its underlying image of the person. In the context Health Education is also defined in a holistic way which refers not only to physical health but also to emotional, mental, spiritual, social and sexual health.

The Department of Education and Science (DES) defines SPHE: "Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development", (p.3, DES SPHE).

## **Aims**

The DES states that the aims of SPHE are as follows:

- To enable the students to develop personal and social skills.
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
- To enable the students to develop a framework for responsible decision making.
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

In addition, we, in St. Peter's Community School, seek through small group work and the use of active, experiential learning methods, to give students an experience of:

- Belonging and being personally known by name, family, background, areas of giftedness and areas of challenge.
- Being listened to.
- Being able to share personal difficulties.
- Learning how to deal with conflict.
- Giving and receiving feedback.
- Developing new ways of communicating.
- Learning about and discussing school regulations and policies.
- Being in an environment where social and emotional skills take precedence over academic.
- Having fun together.

It is thus clearly linked with the aims of the school which are:

- To build a warm, caring, respectful and compassionate school atmosphere in which every person feels accepted, trusted and valued.
- To provide a curriculum, which does in fact cater by design, for the growth of the full person.
- To build each person's sense of self-worth and self-esteem in order to promote self-confidence and a sense of his/her dignity as a human being.
- To develop personal qualities of initiative, independence and a capacity to think critically and make informed judgements.
- To build a supportive and co-operative home/school partnership to help students reach for excellence in their areas of talent and skill.

In order to build a caring school atmosphere, it is vital that all members of the school community, and especially those responsible for delivering the SPHE programme, model relationships which are consistent with school values. Relationships that are:

- Caring
- Respectful
- Supportive
- Encouraging
- Accepting
- Trusting
- Empowering

## **Organisation of Classes and Timetabling and Teaching of SPHE**

- All year groups have one period of SPHE per week.
- SPHE is taught using a set curriculum for each year group which complies with the guidelines laid down by DES.
- The curriculum builds on topics from first to sixth year.

## **SPHE Department Procedures**

SPHE provides an opportunity for the teacher to form a close and knowledgeable relationship with their class group. It is important that each child is known by name and background and that the teacher is aware of any difficulties that the child may be experiencing. Awareness of the strengths and challenges of each child provides a clear focus for skills' development and for evaluation at the end of year.

- Photocopying of worksheets/handouts is the responsibility of the individual teacher.
- Videos will be stored in the SPHE room filing cabinet. The key will be available from the coordinator's locker. Where possible multiple copies of core resources will be made available.
- Each child is expected to have a SPHE copy and a glue stick for pasting in handouts/worksheets. This copy will form part of the student assessment at the end of the year.
- Health and Fitness Week involvement: The SPHE team will liaise with the PE and HE Departments in organising Health and Fitness Week each year.
- Emotional Health Week: The SPHE team will liaise with the PE and RE Departments in organising Emotional Health Week each year.

### **Outline of the Content and Teaching Methods for the SPHE Curriculum**

The Junior Certificate curriculum is presented in ten modules, each of which may be addressed in each year of the Junior Cycle:

1. Belonging and Integrating
2. Self Management
3. Communication Skills
4. Physical Health
5. Friendship
6. Relationships and Sexuality
7. Emotional Health
8. Influences and Decisions
9. Substance Use
10. Personal Safety

### **Teaching Methods**

The promotion of maximum student involvement in each lesson is of primary importance. The following are some of the active methodologies suggested for use in SPHE:

- Group Work
- Paired Work
- Games
- Role Play
- Visualisation
- Story
- Worksheets
- Case Studies
- Brainstorming
- Project Work
- Video and Worksheet/Questions and Discussion
- Debates
- Visitor/Guest Speakers

### **Role of the SPHE Teacher**

- In the SPHE classroom the teacher functions as a facilitator of learning rather than as an authority figure – the emphasis in SPHE is on the students own experience and reflection and on teaching the skills of informed decision making.
- Teachers assigned to SPHE must have an understanding of and familiarity with experiential learning methodologies as well as a high degree of sensitivity and flexibility in dealing with students.
- The building of a personal and knowledgeable relationship with each student is core to the delivery of the program. The Personal Profile Sheet and the Problem Checklist completed in first year is an aid to this process.

- The focus is on the development of specific skills – e.g. listening, confidence, assertiveness and social skills.

#### **Role of the SPHE Co-ordinator**

- Convening meetings of the SPHE Department (minimum of one per term)
- Provision of resources for teachers
- Ensuring that the course complies with DES guidelines
- Organisation of suitable speakers/workshops for students as required
- Support for teachers – particularly those new to the subject
- Updating of resources
- Administration of files and resources
- Co-ordinating the evaluation of the course annually and co-ordinating the re-drafting of the course as required
- Accessing/provision of support for students in difficulty
- Attendance and input at Pastoral Care meetings in the school/liasing with others working in the Pastoral Care area – tutors, Year Heads, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, etc.
- Co-ordination of SPHE reports
- Advising the Principal of the needs and requirements of the SPHE programme

The DES guidelines state: “There is a specially appointed co-ordinator who is allocated time and resources. Best practice suggests that this be an experienced member of staff with a commitment to SPHE. In order to fulfil this role the co-ordinator would need to hold a Post of Responsibility in the school.

#### **Resources and Accommodation for SPHE**

- A specially designated room (A03) is provided for SPHE.
- A resource locker is provided for SPHE.
- When using ordinary classroom accommodation, classes are held ‘in the round’, students are requested to have the tables stacked and the circle of chairs formed in the break between classes.”

#### **Cross Curricular Links**

Cross curricular support for elements of the SPHE programme and for the values and attitudes promoted in SPHE can be extremely valuable. The SPHE curricular links closely with a number of subjects – CSPE, Religion, Home Economics, PE and English. We have developed specific cross curricular links in the following areas:

- |               |                             |                 |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| • First Year  | Bullying                    | SPHE and RE     |
| • Second Year | Relationships and Sexuality | SPHE and RE     |
| • Third Year  | Healthy Eating and Exercise | SPHE, RE and PE |

However, the main focus of the program will be on the designated class period.

#### **Staff Development and Subject Development**

The SPHE Guidelines state: “All teaching is challenging, but teaching an SPHE programme is a particular challenge demanding a high degree of sensitivity. Those involved in the SPHE programme in a school will need continuing support from their colleagues, from their Principal and the Board of Management, and from a range of other agencies that are in apposition to offer in-career support”.

To enhance expertise and delivery of the programme the following are necessary:

- The development of a small team of trained, experienced and committed teachers who work in a respectful, democratic and experiential way with the students.
- Ideally the SPHE teacher will make a three year commitment to the class group so that a personal and knowledgeable relationship may be built up with the students.
- Teachers will be encouraged and facilitated to access training in order to enhance their skills in the area of SPHE.
- The course will be evaluated at bi-yearly intervals.

#### **Links with Pastoral Care: Counsellor/Chaplain/Tutor/Year Heads**

The co-ordinator will be a member of the Pastoral Care Team in the school and will attend meetings. Individual SPHE teachers will liaise with the co-ordinator regarding concerns about individual pupils or other pastoral issues.