



Social, Personal and Health Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a programme that provides students with the opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development.

As the SPHE programme is primarily skills based, teaching methods should be of an experiential nature with an emphasis on discussion reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods are child centered and must be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student. The class atmosphere needs to be one of respect for the privacy of each individual student and hallmarked by sensitivity and care.

The curriculum for SPHE is presented in four strands. An outline of the content of these strands can be found overleaf. More details can be obtained by contacting the school. The Department of Education and Science recognizes that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE Programme most suitable for the students and the school.

Classroom Issues

(a) Participation

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one element of the programme. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some of all RSE classes but parents are encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice. It will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school principal for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents wishing to withdraw their daughter from RSE must inform the Principal in writing of their decision by the last day of September of each year, otherwise the students will take part in the RSE classes.

(b) Sensitive Issues

Class discussion will be of a general nature, and will not target individuals in accordance with the class ground rules. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. The SPHE teacher may exercise his or her own professional judgment in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. This must be done in harmony with the ethos of the school. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor, the Principal or the Deputy Principal without identifying the pupil in the first instance.

(c) Confidentiality

While an atmosphere of trust is pre-requisite of SPHE class, the following limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

Child abuse: (i) Physical, (ii) Emotional, (iii) Sexual, (iv) Neglect

Intention to harm self or others

Substance misuse

Underage sexual intercourse

SPHE teachers should inform students of these limits at the beginning of the year and where possible before making a disclosure

(d) Referral

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the personal, social and emotional needs of our students are responded to in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. As far as possible this should be done in negotiation with the student. The teacher should inform the class of external services relevant to the class material. This should be done within the context of the ethos of St. Mary's Secondary School. SPHE teachers, where in doubt as to a course of action, are encouraged to discuss the issue with a senior member of staff without identifying the student in the first instance.

Parents are welcome to view the full SPHE/RSE Policy and teaching resources by contacting the school office on 067 31450.

An overview of the Junior Cycle SPHE course

The junior cycle short course in SPHE is designed to enable students to develop a positive sense of themselves and a commitment to caring for themselves and others. The course is presented in the following four strands.

<p>Strand 1 - Who am I?</p> <p>This strand focuses on developing self-awareness and building self-esteem.</p> <p>How I see myself and others Being an adolescent Self-Management My rights and the rights of others</p>	<p>Strand 2 - Minding myself and others</p> <p>This strand provides opportunities for students to reflect on how they can best take care of themselves and others.</p> <p>Being healthy Substance Use Respectful communication Anti-bullying</p>
<p>Strand 3 – Team Up</p> <p>This strand focuses on students learning about important relationships in their lives and building relationship skills.</p> <p>Having a friend and being a friend The relationship spectrum Sexuality, gender identity and sexual health Media influence on relationships and sexuality</p>	<p>Strand 4 – My mental health</p> <p>This strand focuses on building positive mental health, examining young people’s experience of mental ill health and learning how to support themselves and others in challenging times.</p> <p>Positive mental health Mental health and mental ill-health Dealing with tough times Loss and bereavement</p>