

Policy on Social Personal and Health Education

“Our school is a caring Christian Community in which pupils have the opportunity to achieve academic excellence and to grow spiritually, emotionally, socially, creatively and physically in a healthy environment.”

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 Loreto Abbey, 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 develop students to be 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 personal and social skills
- 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 and Senior Cycle students. 5th Year students have one timetabled SPHE class per week. Classes are organised in mixed ability groupings.

An RSE programme takes place as part of Religious Education in Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Year. Seminars are conducted on topics pertinent to the curriculum.

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.

At Junior Cycle, students use a workbook and also have an SPHE folder for handouts and a copy or e-folder for additional reflections. In Fifth Year, each student has an SPHE file in which all classwork and homework is kept.

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 with resource staff in connection with the RSE programme. Otherwise, links are made at the discretion of the teacher.

6. Content:

SPHE for Junior Cycle comprises ten modules for current Third Year students. 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 Junior Cycle SPHE:

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

SPHE for Junior Cycle comprises four strands for current First and Second Year students:

- Who Am I?
- Minding Myself and Others
- Team Up
- My Mental Health

5th Year SPHE is timetabled for all students. This course consists of the following modules:

- Relationship with Life
- Mental Health
- Substance Use
- Physical Activity and Nutrition

Relationships and Sexuality Education takes place in RE class.

There are additional programmes that become available. Loreto Abbey will adopt the following criteria when considering a programme:

- A need has been identified through the school's Wellbeing Promotion Process that could be addressed by using a specific programme
- The programme is consistent with the school's whole school approach to wellbeing promotion
- The Board of Management has approved the delivery of the programme
- The chosen programme is informed by research and/or evidence
- The programme uses evidence based/informed methodologies and promotes active learning
- All relevant staff members have been informed about the proposed programme
- The programme is suitable to meet the needs of the targeted cohort of students
- In the selection of programmes, the opinion of parents/carers and students have been ascertained

- An evaluation form will be completed by students and staff
- The impact of the programme will be monitored
- The programme delivery is sustainable over time within the school
- Consideration has been given to the possible vulnerabilities of students and the minimising of any potential negative impact of the programme
- Supports are available for the students during and after the programme delivery

7. Methodologies:

The methodologies employed will include:

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

In the light of the advice contained in Circular 0023/2010, the following approaches will be avoided when teaching SPHE in Loreto Abbey:

- Scare tactics
- Sensationalist approaches
- Testimonials
- Information only interventions
- Information that is not age appropriate
- Once-off/short-term interventions
- Normalising young people's risky behaviour
- Didactic approaches

8. 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 Designated Liaison Person (Principal) or to the Student Support Team.

9. Resources and accommodation for SPHE:

A wide range of resources can be found in the SPHE Resource locker beside the staff room which is easily accessible to all SPHE teachers. First and Second Year classes use EdCo's Health and Wellbeing SPHE 1 and 2 (teacher resource book and student workbook). Third Year classes use The North Western Health Board 'Life Skills' series (teacher pack and student workbook). To complement these books teachers use resources including X-Hale Irish Cancer Society resource on smoking, "#Up2US", Drinkaware's Alcohol Education Programme, resources on online safety from www.webwise.ie ('Lockers', 'Be in Ctrl', 'Be Safe', Be Webwise') and appropriate video clips. At Senior Cycle teachers use 'B4 U Decide', 'Trust Pack', 'Growing Up LGBT', Marie Keating Foundation's Cancer Awareness Pack and a selection of age appropriate YouTube clips, RTE documentaries and TED Talks. A workbook "Ways to Wellbeing", John Doran, has been introduced for 5th Year SPHE to complement and consolidate work being done in class.

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.

The SPHE Department has been assigned a special notice board to highlight and promote the subject.

"Mind Your Mind" week and "Stand Up Against Homophobic Bullying Week" are accommodated in the school calendar.

10. 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

11. Staff development and subject development

(See Staff Professional Development Policy)

The qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and she/he has a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviours in all aspects of Wellbeing education. This can be achieved through accessing continuing professional development (CPD) which includes the sharing of expertise and learning, and having opportunities to model and engage in collaborative working. The Board of Management will ensure that all staff have opportunities to engage in CPD to enhance the effective delivery of our programmes.

12. External Facilitators:

The school is informed in this regard by Circular 0043/2018, Best practice guidance for post primary schools in the use of programmes and/or external facilitators in promoting wellbeing consistent with the Department of Education and Skills' Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice.

We recognise that external facilitators can play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting the school's Wellbeing process.

- External facilitators should be approved by the Principal and Board of Management in consultation with the relevant teaching staff. All materials proposed for use by the external facilitator must also be agreed by the Principal and the Board.
- All external facilitators must be compliant with the school's Child Protection Policy and other relevant school policies and procedures.
- All vetting obligations that arise under the Vetting Act and in line with Circular 0031/2016 are met.
- Programmes used are delivered by facilitators who are qualified to work within the specific area of content and with students for whom the programmes are designed.
- Relevant school staff liaise with facilitators in advance of delivery
- External facilitators always work under the guidelines and supervision of the relevant classroom teacher who remains in the classroom with the students at all times and retains a central role in the delivery of the subject matter.
- Relevant school staff are consulted and made aware in advance of the content of the programmes provided by external facilitators.

- Parents are consulted and made aware in advance of the content of the programmes provided by external facilitators.
- External facilitators and programmes are evaluated by students and teachers, with regard to the subject matter, messages communicated, methodology and proposed learning outcome.

When appraising the appropriate use of external facilitators, Loreto Abbey will consider the following criteria:

- Facilitators supply comprehensive information to the school about their organisation, programme content and programme methodology.
- Facilitators demonstrate an understanding of the Department's *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice* and appropriate educational training and qualifications.
- Facilitators demonstrate skills in facilitating and managing groups and students.
- Facilitators demonstrate an understanding of the general organisation and structure of schools.
- Facilitators show an understanding of the role of school management, school support structures, roles of support staff and other relevant support services in the event of a challenging situation arising.

13. 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 can be given an overview of the syllabus and questions can be clarified.

The Parents' Association organises three lectures for parents during the academic year on issues dealt with in SPHE lessons.

In the case of RSE, parents are informed by letter before the RSE module begins. If parents require further discussion/clarification, this is accommodated by the school.

14. Assessment, record keeping and reporting:

All student work is kept in individual student files. 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.

A comment on student participation in SPHE class is given on Junior Cycle school reports.

Certification has been introduced at 5th and 6th year level to acknowledge participation in class and engagement with the subject. Certification affirms the role of SPHE in the holistic development of our students.

15. Whole school support for SPHE:

Loreto Abbey is a health promoting school which supports the ideals of the SPHE programme. Some examples of this are:

- Healthy, nutritious lunches are available to students each day at a reasonable price.
- Sports programmes and fitness lessons are engaged in by a large number of students.
- "Spirit Day" and "Active School Week" both have activity based components.
- The CARA programme helps develop social skills and community building between Junior and Senior students.
- "Friendship Week" is a proactive programme for promoting good relationships.
- Student support is a priority in Loreto Abbey Dalkey (see Student Support Policy).

16. SPHE Support Group:

The SPHE Support Group is made up of a representative number of fifth and sixth year students who act as a link between SPHE teachers and the student body. The aim of the group is to discuss topics that are relevant to young people and bring them to the attention of the SPHE teachers so they can discuss these topics with their classes. Their approach involves organising events, peer teaching and discussions as well as advising the SPHE teachers in relation to the curriculum.

(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.
- To promote a positive and inclusive attitude towards the LGBTQ community at an age-appropriate level.

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.
- Be aware of the methods of contraception that are available (third year and above).
- 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, 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.

Senior RSE including Transition Year takes place within RE class, but is viewed as a separate module.

EVALUATION:

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

This revised policy was adopted at a Board meeting on 27th February 2017.

Signed: 

Date: 27th February 2017

The SPHE policy will be reviewed in 2020/2021