



St. Mark's Boys National School

SPHE and RSE Policy

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy

Introductory Statement:

This policy was devised by the staff of St. Mark's Boys National School, in consultation with the Board of Management in May 2020. It was reviewed and updated in January 2022 in line with new practises in the school.

Definition of SPHE:

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) provides the students in St. Mark's Boys National School with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

Rationale/ Vision:

This policy has been formulated to define and describe the role of S.P.H.E. in St. Mark's Boys National School. The plan is a record of whole school decisions in relation to SPHE.

Aims:

The aims of Social, Personal and Health Education are:

- To promote the personal development and well-being of the child
- To foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being
- To promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects
- To enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future
- To develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life
- To enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world. **(See page 9 of the Curriculum Statement)**

Broad Objectives:

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the SPHE curriculum should enable the child to:

- Be self-confident and have a positive sense of self-esteem.
- Develop a sense of personal responsibility and come to understand his/her sexuality and the processes of growth, development and reproduction.
- Develop and enhance the social skills of communication, cooperation and conflict resolution.
- Create and maintain supportive relationships both now and in the future.
- Develop an understanding of healthy living, an ability to implement healthy behaviour and a willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health.
- Develop a sense of safety and an ability to protect himself/herself from danger and abuse.
- Make decisions, solve problems and take appropriate actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- Become aware of, and discerning about, the various influences on choices and decisions.
- Begin to identify, review and evaluate the values and attitudes that are held by individuals and society and to recognise that these affect thoughts and actions.
- Respect the environment and develop a sense of responsibility for its long-term care.
- Develop some of the skills and abilities necessary for participating fully in groups and in society.
- Become aware of some of the individual and community rights and responsibilities that come from living in a democracy.
- Begin to understand the concepts of personal, local, national, European and global identity.
- Appreciate and respect the diversity that exists in society and the positive contributions of various cultural, religious and social groups.
- Promote the values of a just and caring society in an age-appropriate manner and understand the importance of seeking truth and peace. **(See page 10 of the Curriculum Statement)**

Teaching/ Learning Contexts:

It is our aim at St. Mark's to integrate SPHE into every aspect of school life. We believe that a positive school climate and atmosphere and the adoption of the following strategies will help to achieve this aim.

1. Building effective communication within the school:

In-school:

- Notice Boards – Staff Rooms
- Open door policy to all staff and prompt responses to concerns
- Important information sent around to staff via email and Whatsapp notifications.
- Children are involved in establishing rules and expectations in-class, e.g. Our Class Rules.
- Aladdin for schools.
- Children report bullying to the class teacher/yard duty teacher.
- Student Council
- School Assemblies (currently conducted via Zoom)

Parents:

- Regular text messages/ Facebook updates and school website updates.
- Parent/Teacher Meetings – By appointment and via phone or face to face
- Coffee/Tea sessions after religious/sacramental events/school events.
- Home School Community Liaison organises talks for parents/courses etc. fundraising and help out in school activities
- Good News Notes about children sent home to parents
- Home-School Communication notebook and emails

Visitors:

- Facilities/room provided for visitors (“Parent’s Room”)
- Deputy Principal/School Administrator greets visitors and new staff
- Invited to the staff room for breaks during visits.
- Student Council greets special visitors e.g. Lord Mayor

2. Catering for individual needs:

- School sports teams- Soccer & Hurling
- We use a variety of teaching styles & activities – Activity-based learning.
- General positive school climate with regard to reinforcing positive behaviour.
- Special Education Teachers work in-class and 1:1 with children
- Social skills training - social groups
- Intimate Care and Toileting policy and procedure in place.
- SEN policy/differentiated programmes - SSPs and SSFs devised for each individual pupil according to their needs
- Developing the arts; drumming, recorder, school choir, Music- Mashup etc
- Coding and Robotics Teams
- Happy Talk- speech and language programme for Junior Infants
- SCP (School Completion programme)
- External professionals - SALT, Túsla. NEPS
- Provision of Reading Recovery.
- Provision of Maths Recovery

3. Creating a health-promoting physical environment:

- Well maintained school with large green areas
- Playground markings for yard time activities.
- Attractive and well-equipped playground
- Children’s work on display throughout school.
- Student Council.
- Active School committee.
- PE programme - Resource Centre, external coaches
- Cork Sports Partnership Programme
- Barber Cup (Tennis)
- Sports Day
- City Sports
- Sciath na Scoil
- School Completion Programme sports sessions
- School Tours

4. Developing democratic processes:

- Pupils involved in drawing up class rules.
- Students vote class representatives to St. Mark's Student Council.
- Code of Behaviour is widely publicised
- Children bring home their own rubbish.
- Job allocations in classrooms.
- Children represent the school in a wide variety of activities e.g. coding, sports, music, art and Drama.

5. Enhancing the self-esteem and well-being of members of the school community:

- Reward systems in place classes/displaying children's work.
- Photographs on display of winners/successes/a special visit/ in our corridors.
- Promotion of the school through Facebook and Website
- Involvement in committees.
- Sacramental Events
- Organising/attending/training courses.
- Availing of DES support.
- Regular appraisal of staff efforts.
- Inclusion of children in school announcements.
- Social outings for Staff.
- Social outings for students

6. Fostering respect for diversity:

- Anti-bullying policy exists and is practised by all staff members.
- Communicating school policies and practises to all parents and children.
- Children may be included in teams, choirs, concerts, photo opportunities etc.
- Resources are in place to cater for the needs of minorities e.g. SET, SNA.
- Day of celebrating Diversity planned

7. Fostering inclusive and respectful language:

- Praise, encourage and affirm.
- Zero tolerance of racist/ offensive language.
- Promote minority cultures in a positive light. (Bluestar Programme may be explored)
- Being conscious of different family structures and units, and respecting them.

8. Developing appropriate communication between home and school:

- Regular emails, texts, Facebook/ websites posts, notice boards, posters etc.
- Parent Teacher meetings.
- Team meetings for children with SEN re; SSP/ SSF etc.
- Policy statements available for viewing on the school website.
- Home School Links Policy.
- Communication diaries for children in Special Classes
- Daily emails, Seesaw updates for children in Special Classes
- Open morning for Junior Infants
- Open Evening for prospective pupils
- Christmas Concert - in Church or Halla when available
- Active School activities e.g. Monster Walk, Christmas Jumper Walk
- Parent assisted activities in Parents' Room and classrooms e.g. Maths for Fun,

Happy Talk initiative, art during special events throughout the year, science for fun, Grandparent's Day.

9. Integration:

- R.E. - Preparation for Sacraments, Code of Behaviour
- S.E.S.E. - Experiencing empathy, Taking Care of your Body, Environmental Care, Friendship
- ENGLISH - Social Stories, Social Language, Zones of Regulation
- VISUAL ARTS - Internet Safety, Anti- Bullying, Activity Posters (ASF)
- PHYSICAL EDUCATION - Teamwork, co-operative activities
- MUSIC - Meditative Music, Cosmic Yoga
- DRAMA- Social Stories, Role play, Hot seating
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10: Policies and Programmes that support SPHE:

- The Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme.
- Weaving Wellbeing.
- Stay Safe Programme.
- Walk Tall (additional resource)
- Anti-Bullying/ Code of Behaviour Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Mobile and smartphone policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- SCP Programme
- Children First Programme- annual certification for staff
- Busy Bodies (6th Class)
- External speakers for RSE
- Road Safety- RSA, Safe Cross Code
- Dental Hygiene- Visit from Dental Nurse
- Healthy Eating Programme - Food Dudes

11. Approaches and Methodologies:

We adopt the following approaches and methodologies:

- Active learning which includes drama activities, cooperative games, use of pictures, photographs and visual images, written activities, discussion, use of media and information technologies and looking at children's work.
- Talk and discussion.
- Skills through Content.
- Collaborative learning.
- Problem-solving.
- Use of the Environment.
- Group work
- Role-play
- Brainstorming
- Debating
- Artwork
- Case Studies

12. Timetable and Planning:

Following an assessment and evaluation of the needs of our pupil cohort, it was decided that wellbeing, mental health and finding the language to express emotions was one of our key priorities. With this in mind, the staff agreed upon the programme “Weaving Wellbeing” for 3rd to 6th class and Mindful Matters for children in Junior Infants up to 2nd class.

- The delivery of the Stay Safe programme is mandatory, and as such, is carried out in Term two of each school year. (See document attached for Stay Safe procedures)
- As per the guidelines in the Primary School Curriculum, teachers will assign ½ an hour per week to the SPHE curriculum. Each teacher will be responsible for the timetabling and organisation of the SPHE Programme in their classroom. Discretionary time will be used for SPHE as required.
- Stay Safe is mandatory and taught in a block in term 2. All other topics are taught at the appropriate time for the class level involved and are at the teacher’s discretion
 - Mindful Matters- Junior Infants to 1st Class (including Special classes)
 - Weaving Well-Being- 2nd Class to 6th Class (including Special classes)
 - Content from SPHE curriculum - teacher designed lessons
 - RSE - from Stay Safe and Relationships and Sexuality Education

13. Special Educational Needs:

Teachers will adapt and modify activities and methodologies in SPHE to support the participation of pupils with special needs. Special Education Teachers will supplement the SPHE programme of work of the class teachers where necessary i.e. social stories etc. The school liaises with trained relevant professionals/ agencies when dealing with sensitive issues that may arise for pupils such as bereavement or loss or family issues etc. We have five ASD units in the school and the SPHE programme is differentiated according to their specific needs.

14. Content:

The SPHE curriculum is presented in three strands; Myself, Myself and Others and Myself and the Wider World. Each strand is taught by all teachers from Junior Infants to 6th Class annually. Each strand is then divided into strand units. There are nine strand units for all classes from Junior Infants to Second Class and ten strand units for all classes from Third Class onwards.

Strands	Strand Units
Myself	Self-identity Taking Care of my Body Growing and Changing Safety and Protection Making Decisions (3rd-6th only)
Myself and others	Myself and My Family Myself and Other People Relating to Others
Myself and the wider world	Media Education Developing Citizenship

15 Assessment:

Assessment is a central part of the learning and teaching process in SPHE. Assessment of and Assessment for Learning provides information on the pupil's progress and on the effectiveness of the curricular programmes and the teaching methods.

The teachers use

- Observation and questions to assess the children's engagement and interest
- Use of teacher-designed tasks such as worksheets, quizzes or games
- Use of reflection or learning log

16. Community Links:

- Pupils involved in Carol singing for Christmas.
- Pupils involved in church singing.
- Involved in Cork City Sports/ Cork Parks Tennis.
- Cork Sports Partnership
- Visits from Community Garda/School Nurse/Parish Priest to classes.
- Health Board – Provide personnel for Parent Talks e.g. School Nurse, Speech Therapist.
- Regular class visits to school library
- Involvement in the Active School Initiative.
- Tank Field GAA Club
- Resource Centre - weekly use of facilities for P.E and soccer

17: Resources:

- SPHE Curriculum.
- Stay Safe Programme.
- Relationship and Sexuality Education Programme.
- Weaving Wellbeing Programme.
- Mindful Matters
- Walk Tall
- Visiting Speakers (for example Gardaí, Fire Service, Foróige)

18: Provision for training and staff development:

Some/all of the teaching staff has attended:

- Training in the Children First Guidelines (required annually in August)
- Incredible Years training.
- Stay Safe Programme

19: Key Considerations:

- Financial Constraints.
- Wide Variety of family backgrounds with different social, ethnic and religious attitudes and experiences.

- English not first language – for some parents and pupils – need for explanation of school policies to parents.
- Urban backgrounds - physical Constraints – no green area for play.
- Social and economic factors.

20: Roles and Responsibilities:

- B.O.M. → ratify plan and support implementation.
- Parents → be aware of content of school plan and support SPHE through involvement in homework.
- Principal → oversees implementation and supports staff.
- Teachers → follow school plan and implement SPHE accordingly.
- Pupils → Cooperate and participate in class lessons.
- Other staff → be aware of the contents of this plan and follow procedures re. Same.



St. Mark's Boys National School

SPHE and RSE Policy

RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (RSE) POLICY

Introductory Statement and Rationale:

This policy statement is an approved approach to the teaching of RSE in St. Mark's Boys National School. St. Mark's is committed to the education of children regardless of race, religion, or status. All pupils have a right to an education which adequately prepares them for adult life, and RSE plays an integral part in this education.

School Philosophy:

St. Mark's Boys National School is a Catholic school and therefore all policies developed are implemented in ways which are in keeping with the ethos of the school. The ethos of the school is characterised by the following:

- Child-centred.
- Sensitive to the reality of our children's lives in a changing world.
- Mutual respect between all partners in education.
- Aims to ensure each child reaches full potential in the holistic sense.
- Hopes that children are equipped with high self-esteem to enable them to live happy and fulfilled lives.

Definition of RSE:

RSE is an integral part of Social, Personal and Health Education and must be taught in this context. It provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality and relationships through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Aims of RSE Programme:

- To help young people develop healthy friendships and relationships.
- To promote a healthy attitude to sexuality and to relationships.
- To enhance the personal development, self-esteem and well-being of the child.
- To foster an understanding of, and a healthy attitude to, human sexuality and relationships in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

- To enable the child to acquire an understanding of, and respect for, human love, sexual intercourse and reproduction.
- To develop and promote in the child a sense of wonder and awe at the process of birth and new life.
- To enable the child to be comfortable with the sexuality of oneself and others while growing and developing.

Relationship of RSE to SPHE:

Social, Personal and Health Education contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, political, religious and creative development.

Current Provision:

The educational and emotional needs of the children in our care are central to our planning and policy making processes. We have always, and will always continue to put the welfare of the children first.

Criteria for choosing Resources for RSE

When choosing resources to use for delivery of the RSE programme, the staff at St. Mark's consider the following criteria:

- 1: Does it address the content objective I am trying to teach?
2. Is the resource free of bias?
3. Is the resource free of negative stereotyping?
4. Is the resource inclusive of all the children in our school?
5. Is the resource age-appropriate? (SPHE Teacher Guidelines p. 103)

***** We are hoping that these criteria will be fully met by the new RSE resources which are currently in development. It is our hope that it will reflect the issues that our children face in terms of alternative family structures, issues around consent and respectful relationships and attitudes towards females*****

The RSE Curriculum will be taught through:

- stories and poems
- classroom discussion
- group work
- games
- art activities
- reflection
- circle time
- guest speaker (The class teacher will stay in the room at all times in accordance with Circular 42/2018).

Resources used:

PDST website
NCCA website
Relationship & Sexuality Education (DES)
Stay Safe Programme
Walk Tall (additional resource)
Busy Bodies programme
Healthy Bodies: A Parent's Guide on Puberty for Boys with Disabilities
Talk about Sex & Relationships Part 1 + 2 (additional resource)

Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of RSE in St Mark's Boys National School:

Curriculum:

The content and topics for the teaching of RSE are outlined in the School Plan and in the Primary School Curriculum. (see appendix 1 & 2) RSE will be taught in Infants to 6th class. "Sensitive issues" i.e. puberty, stages of baby in the womb, reproductive system, conception, birth and sexual intercourse, at 5th and 6th Class will be addressed by the Class Teacher or by a visiting tutor who has expertise in the relevant areas. The class teacher will be the first preference in this situation but the second preference will be used in certain circumstances. All resources used will be in keeping with the ethos of the school and the policy. Teachers are equipped with a document which indicates the language that is appropriate for each class level. (see Appendix 3)

In a multi class situation, the younger class will be withdrawn when topics being taught are not age-appropriate. When an outside speaker is used, the class teacher is responsible for making them aware of school policy and that teacher will sit in during the lesson.

Organisation

If children are withdrawn due to parental requests, they will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom. In our ASD classes, many lessons are 1:1 with the class teacher, or in a group of five or six children. The resources for these lessons are chosen specifically for children with additional needs. With regard to matters of a confidential nature, the school cannot take any responsibility for what is discussed in the yard or classroom.

Parents are informed prior to the teaching of RSE and are invited/welcome to view the curriculum and speak to the class teacher if they have any concerns. Parents are given a permission slip to opt into RSE education in their son's class.

Language

The SPHE curriculum provides a context in which children are given opportunities to develop and enhance their language skills and to increase their vocabulary related to SPHE. Children should become aware of the power and influence of language. When used positively, language can build up, affirm and show respect to another human being but if used in a negative manner can hurt, diminish and demean. Children need to recognise and become sensitive to the ways in which they themselves use language in their relationship and their everyday interactions. Language is a powerful tool and should be used with respect and integrity for the dignity of each person. There are two areas where the use of language is applied in RSE lessons;

- 1) The formal use and teaching of language generally throughout the school
- 2) The use of language in discussion through your formal RSE lessons

Appropriate vocabulary in formal teaching relating to sexuality, growing up, physical changes, parts of the body and feelings will be used. The use of slang will be discouraged. Anatomical terms and language introduced is consistent with RSE Materials Books (see Appendix 3)

Dealing with Questions:

We use some simple principles when fostering discussion and questioning and these are agreed with the class prior to starting a lesson

- No personal questions of the teacher
- The Question Box will be availed of by the children
- The teacher will be mindful of their reaction to any questions
- Questions do not have to be answered straight away

Question Box

During the delivery of each section of the sensitive lessons– children will be encouraged to place their questions into a box in the classroom. These questions will then be monitored and screened with the teacher answering the questions the following week taking into account the following;

- Questions arising from lesson content will be answered in an age-appropriate manner.
- The class teacher cannot answer questions which do not relate to the particular curriculum objectives for a class.
- Pupils will be informed if a question/issue is not on the programme and they will be advised to talk with their parents
- Teachers may exercise discretion to contact parents themselves if they feel that a question is very inappropriate or needs to be communicated with home because of other reasons
- No personal questions will be answered and children will be reminded not to share personal information about their families or others – but can share with the teacher after the lessons.

If issues arise which might be seen to contravene Children First Guidelines, the teacher will notify the Designated Liaison Person in the school.

Parental Involvement:

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators of their children and as such the school supports them in this role. As stated parents/guardians will be given the option of withdrawing their child from a particular lesson if they so wish. (see Appendix 2)

Provision for Ongoing Support:

- Parents welcome to view curriculum if they wish
- Regular contact with parents prior to the teaching of lessons involving “sensitive issues” in the form of the home/school link page accompanying such lessons in the RSE Resource Books OR contact will be made with parents prior to the address by the outside speaker.
- “Busy Bodies” booklet distributed to parents

Confidentiality:

As part of the teaching of SPHE, each class teacher shall make a verbal confidentiality contract with the children. Pupils will be advised not to discuss information from the RSE programme with younger children. The school follows Children First Guidelines 2017 and The Child Protection Procedures for

Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. If a child is withdrawn from the teaching of sensitive issues, we cannot guarantee that the other children will not tell or inform him/her about what happened.

Success criteria:

The teacher's classroom planning will be centred on this framework. The aims and objectives of this plan will be followed with emphasis on developing a whole school programme that allows for development and progression. The Success of this plan will be based on the following;

- Teacher feedback
- Pupil feedback
- Inspector's suggestions and reports
- Board of Management feedback
- Parental feedback

Review:

The School policy on SPHE including RSE was reviewed in January 2022. Reviews will be regular and ongoing and any necessary revisions will be implemented. The responsibility for this review process will rest with the Principal and Management Staff. The next formal review of the School Plan for SPHE including RSE will take place in June 2024 or sooner if the new DES RSE resources are published.

Signed Anne O'Donovan Date 01-02-'22

Chairperson, Board of Management

Signed Johnna Brice Date 01/02/2022

Principal