



# **SPHE Policy**

## **November 2019**

## EDUCATE TOGETHER AFFIRMS THAT:

<p><b>Multi-denominational schools have the right to be treated no less favourably</b> than other schools within the Irish educational system, in accordance with their needs and their identity.</p>	<p><b>Children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds have a right to an education that respects their individual identity</b> whilst exploring the different values and traditions of the world in which they live.</p>
	<p><b>The state has a duty to take the identity of the multi-denominational sector fully into account</b> when deciding on policy that affects the establishment and development of schools.</p>
	<p><b>Parents are entitled to participate actively in decisions that affect the education of their children.</b> In particular they have the right to decide what kind of school reflects their conscience and lawful preference.</p>

## and COMMITS ITSELF TO:

### Support the establishment of schools which are:



<p><b>Multi-denominational</b> i.e. all learners having equal rights of access to the school, and children of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds being equally respected.</p>	<p><b>Learner-centred</b> in their approach to education.</p> <p><b>Co-educational</b> and committed to encouraging all children to explore their full range of abilities and opportunities.</p>	<p><b>Democratically run</b> with active participation by parents in the daily life of the school, whilst positively affirming the professional role of the teachers.</p>
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### and in areas where the demand for such a school exists:



<p>Promote fuller awareness and recognition of the identity of the multi-denominational sector at all levels in Irish society and abroad.</p>	<p>Participate in appropriate structures and activities concerned with the future development of education in Ireland and abroad.</p>	<p>Promote a future where multi-denominational education will be as freely available to parents as any other educational option they may choose.</p>
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Social, Personal and Health Education is part of an education process that provides students with the opportunity to develop a sense of personal identity, self-esteem and the ability to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. SPHE should provide learning opportunities and experiences which help students' social, moral, cultural and personal development. It should assist student growth and development as individual people and in their relationship to others as a family member, friend, peer or member of society.

### ***The Aims of SPHE in Galway ETSS***

Building on the aims of SPHE in the primary level, at post- primary level SPHE aims are

- 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 provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- To promote physical, mental and emotional well being

The SPHE programme promotes a holistic view of education, embedding key life skills and responsible decision making. Galway ETSS implements policies and practices which further the development of self-discipline and enable students to take progressive responsibility for their own lives and actions.

### ***Rationale for Policy***

Galway Educate Together Secondary School recognises that the school is a 'place to promote the moral, spiritual and personal development of students and provide health education for them in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school'. (Education Act, 1998)

### ***Goals of the Policy***

That each student in the school community will:

- Have the opportunity to develop their understanding of themselves, society and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development
- Engage with learning opportunities and experiences which help foster social, moral, cultural and personal development
- Be enabled to grow and develop as individual people and in relationship to others as a family member, friend and member of society
- Experience a consistent, coherent and holistic programme of SPHE in each year of Junior and Senior cycle

## ***Roles and Responsibilities in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating Galway Educate Together Secondary School SPHE Policy***

The SPHE programme will seek to ensure that the needs of the various partners in the process of education are met. These partners include the students, staff, parents/guardians, Board of Management and Patrons of Galway Educate Together Secondary School, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Health and Children.

### ***Board of Management***

The Board will ensure that the ethos and values of the Patrons are reflected in the formulation of the SPHE (and RSE) policies.

### ***Principal and Deputy Principal***

The Principal and Deputy Principal are committed to supporting all staff involved in delivering the SPHE programme and will facilitate ongoing staff development and training both within the school and in external in-service courses.

### ***SPHE Teachers***

Teachers of SPHE will implement the aims and objectives of the SPHE programme using a range of teaching and learning strategies that observe agreed ground rules for SPHE class. Teachers of SPHE will attend SPHE Department meetings and in-service training. Teachers of SPHE will work with all the recognised partners in education in developing the SPHE programme so that it meets the needs of the students and reflects the values and ethos of the school.

The SPHE teachers will work as a department to ensure consistent and effective delivery of the SPHE programme during each academic year and maintain records of the work of the SPHE department.

### ***Policy Content***

#### **Outline of the Programme, Implementation and Teaching Methods**

##### **The SPHE Programme at Junior Cycle**

The Curriculum for Junior Cycle SPHE is presented in ten modules. Every module is addressed in each year of the three year cycle.

Students are timetabled for one sixty minute SPHE class per week for each year of the Junior Cycle. 4 of the timetabled classes are designated to delivery of the RSE programme at the start of the second term.

Structure of the Junior Cycle SPHE short course:

- Strand 1: Who am I?
- Strand 2: Minding myself and others
- Strand 3: Team Up (Relationships and relationship skills)
- Strand 4: My Mental Health

See Appendix 1 for outline of Junior Cycle Short Course

### **The SPHE Programme at Senior Level**

The aim of SPHE in Senior cycle is to ‘support students in making choices for health and wellbeing’.

Students should be able to make links between what they learn in ‘SPHE, the school, home, the wider community and virtual communities’.

As with Junior Cycle SPHE the programme seeks to ensure that the needs of the various partners in the process of education are met.

An important aim of the senior SPHE programme is to enable students to cope in a constructive way with challenges that they may encounter in life when in school and after leaving school such as peer pressure, conflict, loss and personal stress etcetera.

The curriculum framework in senior cycle SPHE is based on five areas of learning. These are:

- Mental Health
- Gender Studies
- Substance Use
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Physical Activity and Nutrition

### ***Learning and Teaching Methods***

Learning methods and teaching methodologies will be of an active nature and will emphasise discussion, reflection and student participation in a manner appropriate to the age and needs of the students as is current practice in all subjects in Galway ETSS. The SPHE class environment will foster respect for the privacy of individual students and will be a safe learning environment for all students.

### ***Class Organisation***

In organising the learning environment, the SPHE teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats each student with sensitivity and care.

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

### ***Planning for Students with Individual Needs***

As per our ethos we have a whole school approach to inclusion. SPHE teachers will, as in all other subject areas, take the needs of all of the students in the class into consideration when planning their lessons. Support is sought from resource staff in connection with the RSE programme where necessary.

### ***Methodologies***

The methodologies employed will include:

- Teamwork
- Artwork
- Brainstorming
- Case studies
- Debates
- Games – Icebreakers
- Games – Simulation
- Group discussions
- Narrative expression
- Project work
- Reflection
- Role play
- Visualisation
- Walking debates
- Bridge 21 style project based learning

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

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

### ***Confidentiality***

At the start of each academic year, students are informed that complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed and that information may have to be passed on as the discretion of the SPHE teacher to the Designated Liaison Person (Principal) or relevant authorities Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy Principal).

### ***Cross-curricular Links***

All subjects/subject departments support SPHE/RSE, particularly:

- Ethical Education
- CSPE
- Art
- Home Economics
- Junior Science
- Tutor Class/Pastoral Care
- Physical Education

### ***SPHE Teacher Training***

The Board of Management will endeavour to provide the necessary resources to support the SPHE programme. School management will encourage and facilitate SPHE teachers to attend In-service training to support delivery and ongoing development of the SPHE programme. A record of courses attended can be found in the SPHE Department folder.

### ***SPHE Workshops and Visiting Speakers/Facilitators***

The school is informed in this regard by **Circular 0023/2010**, Social personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), Best Practice Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools.

### ***Visiting Speakers***

Galway Educate Together Secondary School recognises that visiting speakers/facilitators play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting our programme.

Visitors/visiting groups are required to adhere to the following guidelines for good practice:

- All visits will be planned in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE programmes.
- Visitors to the school will be made aware of the SPHE/RSE policy and other policies as relevant.
- Talks/programmes delivered by external speakers/agencies must be consistent with the ethos of Galway Educate Together Secondary School and the SPHE/RSE programmes. All visits must be planned with school personnel.
- A teacher(s) must remain in the classroom with the student group.
- All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence-based methodologies with clear educational outcomes. Such programmes are best delivered by those specially qualified to work with young people for whom the programmes are designed.
- All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

### ***Student Participation***

SPHE is mandatory for all Junior Cycle students. Parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their child from the RSE module (see RSE policy for full details).

Galway Educate Together Secondary School acknowledges the role of parents/guardians as the primary educators of their children. The programme seeks to support parents in this challenging task.

SPHE is part of Wellbeing on the Junior Cycle Curriculum, all students attend SPHE for one hour per week. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) is one module of the programme.

- In the case of RSE, parents/guardians are informed before the RSE module begins. If parents require further discussion/clarification, this is accommodated by the SPHE teacher.
- The Education Act, 1998 (section 30, subsection (2)(e)) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent/guardian or in the case of a student who has reached the age of 18 years, the student. Hence parents/guardians have the right to withdraw their child from sensitive issues in RSE if they wish to do so on the understanding that as parents/guardians they are taking full responsibility for this aspect of their education. Parents/Guardians do not have to give reasons for withdrawal, but the school respectfully invites them to do so as sometimes we can resolve misunderstandings.
- If a parent/guardian wishes to withdraw their child from RSE class they must put this in writing to the SPHE teacher. Following this they will be invited to meet with the teacher to discuss their concerns. Once a parent/guardian's request to withdraw is made and the meeting has taken place, that request must be complied with until revoked by the parent/guardian.
- Parents/Guardians will be responsible for supervising their child off campus at this time for the RSE class should they decide to withdraw from RSE classes.
- Please refer to RSE policy for full details of this aspect of SPHE.

### ***Assessment, Record Keeping and Reporting***

Submitted course work and ongoing class participation is used by the teacher to assess student engagement with the programme. All student work is kept on OneNote.

Regular SPHE Department meetings take place and a record is kept of each meeting in the subject folder. Discussion and consultation takes place with school management as appropriate. Feedback on student participation in the SPHE programme is facilitated by reports at junior cycle level and at parent-student -teacher meetings.



This policy has been drafted in conjunction with the School Ethos and other relevant policies of the School such as the RSE Policy.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management January 20<sup>th</sup> 2020