



SPHE Policy

December 2025

Signed: _____
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Signed: _____
(Chairperson B.O.M.) Niall Nolan

Date of next review: 2027

Scoil Na Coroine mhuire

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

Whole School Plan 2025

Introductory Statement:

The new Primary Curriculum Framework (2023) combined SPHE with PE, under the Curriculum area of 'Wellbeing'. A new SPHE Primary Curriculum is in its final stages of development. In the meanwhile, the implementation of the existing 1999, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in primary schools continues to broaden and develop in line with curriculum needs and societal changes.

SPHE is a unique curriculum subject because it explicitly teaches life skills. It turns it links directly with many school policies.

Rationale:

The rationale of the 2025 SPHE Plan is to update the 2022 plan in line with current best practice. The plan is a record of whole school decisions in relation to SPHE in line with the Primary Curriculum 1999. It also takes account natural evolution of SPHE teaching, as promoted by The Department of Education. These changes include, but are not limited to:

- The concepts of well-being and mindfulness
- Increased focus on resilience
- Changes in Internet and social media usage and safety
- Increases in anxiety and emotional based school avoidance
- A broader and more holistic understanding of inclusivity
- Greater emphasis on student voice
- Inclusion of the new Cineáltas framework

Its purpose is to guide the teachers in adopting a consistent and coherent approach to the teaching and learning of SPHE in our school. It is intended to guide teachers in their individual planning for SPHE to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the curriculum from Infants to Sixth Class thus ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum. It also aims to support teachers and pupils by providing a framework for key elements of the SPHE plan.

Vision

Our core vision remains unaltered: Scoil Na Coróine mhuire values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We provide a safe, caring school environment where every child is cherished, and helped to achieve their maximum potential intellectually, spiritually, physically and emotionally.

We recognize that SPHE is intrinsic to the holistic learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom. Parents have the primary role in the Social, Personal and Health Education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible.

Aims for SPHE

We endorse the aims of Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum for Primary Schools:

- 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 to give a grounding in how to live a healthy life.
- 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 independent nature of the world.
- To teach skills of personal decision-making, problem solving and foster self-confidence in the context of social relationships

Content of the Plan

Context:

To achieve these aims SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts:

- *Positive School Climate and Atmosphere.*
- *Discrete Time.*
- *Integration with other subject areas*
- *Whole School Assemblies and Initiatives*

Positive School Climate and Atmosphere:

- At the first staff meeting of the year all members of the school community are reminded of the importance of promoting a positive school climate. These key messages dealing with school climate and atmosphere are also referred to, as appropriate, during the year through newsletters, meetings with parents and on a regular basis in classes.
- The staff are aware that their role in helping children to develop their self-esteem is to create an environment within the school that is as positive as possible for all concerned.
- We aim to actively value diversity and to prioritise inclusive and respectful language. We will prioritise both racial and gender equality and respect for those with additional needs.
- We believe that children learn to respect themselves and others through experiencing respect in their own lives and through witnessing respect being shown to others. In turn the adults should lead by example.
- Information of a sensitive nature in relation to a child will only be shared on a need to know basis with staff to show respect to each individual child.
- We work to develop an effective communication system within the school and between the school and home.
- We support a health promoting physical environment. Emphasis on healthy lunches, healthy lifestyle.
- Taking responsibility and pride in the school environment is encouraged through our involvement in the Green Schools initiative and through constant review and promotion of behaviour and habits required for maintaining a clean environment. The playground and the outdoor areas also promote a healthy physical environment.
- We promote democratic processes in all levels of school life while balancing roles, rights and responsibilities. Children experience and practice the democratic process by:
 - Involvement in the Student Council and rights committee
 - Sharing responsibility
 - Valuing the opinions of others
 - Experiencing a sense of belonging to their own class group and the wider school community
 - Developing a sense of commitment to common goals.

Discrete time

The new curriculum area allows the teaching of Well-Being (SPHE and PE combined) is as follows:

Stage: 1 (Infants): 2 hours, 30 mins

Stages: 2,3,4: 3 hours

Individual teachers have flexibility in allocation of time; however, infant's classes must have a minimum of 30 minutes' discrete time per week, and older classes a minimum of 45 minutes. Flexibility is allowed in how time is allocated across the month.

- Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE programme as possible. All children must be present for Stay Safe.
- Content objectives dealing with Self Identify, Feelings and Emotions, Respect, Internet Safety, R.S.E., Stay Safe and Child protection must be addressed through discrete time.

Integration and Re-enforcement

SPHE, is core to our vision of ourself, others and the whole world. Therefore the concepts of the SPHE curriculum underpin, the whole Primary Curriculum.

Many aspects of the SPHE curriculum can be taught as cross curricular topics/projects.

Integration

Indeed, certain elements of SPHE are best taught as integrated topics as they naturally overlap.

A simple example is Food and Nutrition links directly to Science (and could be linked to History and Geography too). If a topic is being taught as an integrated subject the teacher should consider how both sets of Learning Outcomes are addressed (e.g. Science and SPHE in this example).

Re-enforcement

Other elements, which need to be explicitly taught as part of SPHE, benefit from continuous re-enforcement across the curriculum to deepen childrens' understanding.

For example, there are countless opportunities to re-enforce explicitly taught content from Feeling and Emotions across the curriculum (through story, RE, art, drama, winning and losing in PE etc). Effective teaching of the SPHE curriculum depends on following through. Another example, areas such as inclusivity, race, gender, difference may present themselves in the teaching of history, geography, RE and enable constructive discourse and broaden understanding.

Teachers have flexibility to integrate works best with their plans and presentation of a topic.

Whole School Assemblies and Initiatives

Some aspects of the SPHE curriculum are addressed in a whole school forum. Examples such as:

- Kindness award (kindness flag)
- Safety: Water, Road, Halloween, Cyber Safety (teachers to follow up at class level) etc.
- National and Religious events: Christmas, Easter, St Patrick's Day, St Brigid's Day, St Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Grandparents Day, Father's/Parents Day.
- Special Weeks/Days: World Book Day, Internet Safety week, World Tree Day, Culture day, Active week.
- STEM week, Seachtain na Gaeilge , friendship week.
- Green Schools
- Buddy Systems: Paired reading, buddy benches.
- Whole school celebrations: End of Term and Year, Christmas Events, Dress Up Day, Sports Day,
- Mindfulness activities; walks, trips, feel good Friday etc.

Teaching Content/Term	Term 1 Sept-Oct	Term 2 Nov-Dec	Term 3 Spring	Term 4 Summer
All classes Same programme	Zones of Regulation		Stay Safe	Webwise
All classes Same topic (s) different materials		Friendship & Resilience		Personal Safety (PAWS) water Safety Environmental Care
All classes	Well being	Well being	Well being	Well being
Topics of Focus	Myself Myself and others School Community	Myself Myself and others Hygiene Nutrition Media Education	Myself and my family New Life RSE	Myself and the Wider World
3 rd only 6 th only 4 th /5 th /6 th girls 5 TH /6 TH boys			Transition to secondary (SMART MOVES) ACCORD	Transition to secondary

School Completion	Smart moves, Rainbows, roots of empathy (when staffed and available)	Smart moves, Rainbows, roots of empathy (when staffed and available)	Smart moves, Rainbows, roots of empathy (when staffed and available)	Smart moves, Rainbows, roots of empathy (when staffed and available)
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Curriculum:

Strands and Strand Units: The three strands of the SPHE Curriculum – Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the Wider World are the basis of our programme.

SPHE is planned in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in SPHE over a two-year period. Our school decided the five strand units that we wish cover in each year of the two-year cycle. Some topics or strand units are chosen from each of the strands in any one year. We selected strand units from each of the three strands to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum -knowledge, values, attitudes, skills. The topics or strand units not covered in year one are included in the teacher's planning for the following year.

A. **Myself-** *deals with the personal development of the individual child and his/her health and well-being.*

Self-awareness

- Discuss and appreciate the features that make each of us unique.
- Recognise that there are similarities and differences between people.
- Begin to recognise, appreciate and respect their good points-abilities, skills and talents and also become aware of weaknesses.
- Discuss and record personal preferences.
- Using senses, become aware of the immediate world.

Developing self confidence

- Express own views, opinions and preferences.
- Become more self – reliant and independent-
 - Taking own responsibility for own belongings
 - Asking for help when needed
 - Beginning to reflect on own learning experiences
 - Accepting that mistakes are made and learning from the experience,
 - Attempting new tasks
- Begin to learn to cope with various changes as they happen.

- Express personal preferences and opinions and recognise those of others and respect them.

Making decisions

- Identify choices made by self and those made by others.
- Become aware of the outside factors that affect decisions and choices.
- Realise that decision making demands more personal responsibility.

Taking Care of my Body

Knowing my body

- Learn that we need to take care of our bodies so they can work properly.
- Respect own body and that of others.
- Name parts of male and female body using correct anatomical terms and discuss some of their functions.
- Explore and discuss the different things that our bodies can do (move, feel, think etc.)
- Recognise and practise basic hygiene skills (importance of washing hands, skills for dressing self, caring for our clothes, taking proper care of teeth.)
- Realise that we need to take care of ourselves.
- Become aware of how infection is spread and why we need a code of hygiene.

Food and Nutrition

- Become aware of what healthy foods are and why our bodies need them.
- Explore what we like or dislike and the need for a balanced diet.
- Discuss and explore some categories of food (fruit, vegetables, breakfast foods, plant foods and food that comes from animals-proteins, carbohydrates.)
- Realise the importance of good hygiene in preparing food.

Growing and changing

As I grow I change

- Understand what helps us grow (food, rest, sleep, exercise, warmth, love, sun light and fresh air.)
- Realise that as we all grow and develop differently (physically, socially, intellectually and spiritually)
- Recognise that we grow older we need to take more responsibility for ourselves.

New life

- Become aware of new life and birth in the world and learn about life cycles. (Frog, chick, butterfly etc.)
- Develop an awareness of human birth.
- Identify what babies need to help them grow and develop.
- Recognise the various roles parents and other family members have in providing for new born babies.

Feelings and emotions

- Name, identify and discuss a variety of feelings and when we experience them (happiness, love, joy, excitement, surprise, fear, loss, jealousy, pain, loneliness.)
- Explore the variety of ways that we can express and cope with these feelings, choosing which are most acceptable.
- Begin to become sensitive to the feelings of others and how we can influence them.
- Explore and discuss occasions that can promote positive feelings in ourselves.
- Explore various feelings that can change as they get older.

Safety and Protection

Personal Safety

- Recognise and explore situations where children feel safe and those where they may be at risk. (through the use of the Stay Safe Programme- Senior Infants to second class)
- Explore appropriate safety strategies. (Through the use of the Stay Safe programme - Senior Infants to second class)
- Realise how other people can persuade us to change in unsafe behaviour. (through the use of the Stay Safe programme)

Safety Issues

- Develop strategies for keeping safe when travelling. (Learn how to cross the road safely, how to use the school bus and be a pedestrian)
- Realise and understand the rules are necessary to keep us safe. (lining up without running, keeping schoolbag tidy, sit on chair correctly etc.)
- Explore how accidents might be prevented at home, in school on the farm (IFA farm safety video) in the water (water safety video)
- Recognise where it is safe to play and the importance of playing responsibly.
- Realise that many substances used at home or in school are dangerous and should not be touched without permission.
- Explore basic first aid equipment and its uses (plasters, ointments, creams)
- Explore when medicines, injections and pills are used and the safety rules that apply

- B. **Myself and others**- *focuses on developing a sense of care and respect for other people and the facility for relating to and communicating effectively with others.*

Myself and my family

- Identify and name the people who make up a family and appreciate that all family units are not the same.
- Realise that we belong to a family and each person has a place and a role to play within a family.
- Explore the things that families do together.
- Realise that families take care of, support and love each other.
- Explore and acknowledge that many things can and are learned at home
- This strand is covered in the R.E. curriculum.

My friends and other people

- Identify and appreciate friends.
- Discuss and examine the different aspects of friendship and the skills necessary.
- Identify and appreciate friends at school and how they can be helpful and care for each other.
- Explore how friends can influence our personal actions and decisions.
- Discuss and appreciate all the special people in our lives.
- Recognise and explore bullying behaviour, who is involved and its effects on different people. (covered in the Stay Safe Programme)
- Knowing that bullying is always wrong and know what should be done if one is being bullied or you see someone else being bullied. (covered in the Stay Safe programme)

Relating to others

- Listening to and respond to the opinions and views of others.
- Use verbal and non-verbal behaviour to perform social functions.
- Practise care and consideration, good manners when meeting or talking to others.
- Resolve conflicts with others.

This strand is covered in the Oral English Programme.

- C. **Myself and the wider world**- *enables children to explore the various communities in which they live, to learn to operate competently in society and to understand what it means to belong and to share a sense of purpose.*

Developing citizenship

My school community

- Recognise name of school and the people who contribute to school life.
- Realise that each person in school has an important role to play.

- Recognise the importance of sharing and co-operating in all activities in class and school.
- Engage in group activities to learn how to share, co-operate, listen to, work and play together.
- Realise and understand the need for school rules.
- Explore and respect that everyone in the class is different.

Living in the local community

- Recognise and appreciate people or groups who serve the local community and how they enhance the lives of others. (credit unions, sports, clubs)
- Develop a sense of belonging to the community.
- Realise that we need rules in the wider community, who safeguards these rules and the importance of obeying them.
- Suggest ways of helping other people at home, in school and in the local community.
- Recognise that each person has a contribution to make.
- Begin to be aware of local identity and to join in the celebration of local events. (St. Patrick's Day Parade)

Environmental Care

- Appreciate the environment and realise that everybody has a local community and part to play in caring for our environment.

Media Education

- Realise that we receive information from many different sources. (Pictures, posters, other people, books and rhymes and discuss characters and their appealing traits.
- Identify favourite T.V programmes, videos and video games and reasons for preferences.
- Explore popular stories, books and rhymes and discuss characters and their appealing traits.
- Begin to explore IT available.
- Talk about the difference between advertisements and programmes. (This strand is also covered in the English Curriculum.)

Policies and programmes that support SPHE (Please refer to policy documents)

SPHE links with other policies/ programmes used in the school – Substance Misuse Policy, Stay Safe Policy, Child Protection Policy, Enrolment Policy, Attendance Policy, Code of Behaviour Policy, Restorative practice, Bí Cineálta, Acceptable usage Policy, Curriculum documents, Health and Safety statement, Healthy Eating Policy E.g. Food Dudes

Teachers are expected to be familiar with these policies and ensure that the schools agreed policy is followed when addressing these issues. Teachers will access and utilise various other texts for resource material.

Criteria for selecting resources include:

- Conformity with the aims and objectives of the class programme in SPHE and the general principle of the SPHE Curriculum.
- Freedom from bias, racial or sexual stereotyping.
- Compliance with existing school policies.
- Appealing to the pupils and teacher and be reflective of collaborative, active methods of learning.
- Suitability of guest speakers, notwithstanding the fact that the class teacher is responsible for his/her class and should remain with the class at all times for the duration of the visit of the guest speaker.

Summary of Programmes available to use are

Walk Tall Programme

The Walk Tall Programme focuses on building self-esteem and dealing with feelings. The main themes of Walk Tall are:

- *Self-esteem*
- *Feelings*
- *Influences*
- *Decision-making*
- *Drugs Awareness*

Stay Safe Programme

The Stay Safe programme is a personal safety skills programme for primary schools. It aims to reduce vulnerability to child abuse and bullying. It helps to develop children's ability to recognize, resist and report situations of risk or abusive encounters so they can look after themselves in situations which could be upsetting or dangerous.

Mindful matters Programme

Wellbeing and mindfulness programme designed primarily for primary school children in Ireland. It helps children develop:

- emotional regulation
- self-regulation
- focus and concentration
- Resilience and calmness

The lessons cover the following areas:

- Feeling Safe and Unsafe
- Friendship and Bullying
- Touches
- Secrets and Telling
- Strangers

Children participating in this programme will learn:

- To distinguish between safe and unsafe feelings
- To encourage children to value friendships and to teach them skills for making and keeping friends.
- To teach children safety strategies for dealing with bullying.
- To teach children that it is not acceptable to bully others.
- To encourage children to value and enjoy normal affection.
- To teach children how to deal with an unsafe or inappropriate touch.
- To teach the rule: 'Never keep secrets about touching'.
- To help children recognise the difference between a good secret and a bad secret.
- To help children identify the adults they could tell about a bad secret and to give them the opportunity to practice telling.
- To clarify for the children who strangers are.
- To give the children safety strategies for dealing appropriately with strangers.
- Stay Safe Rules: Say No/ Get Away/ Tell & keep telling

Health Education

We will provide a range of lessons dealing with the following topics:

- Diet and nutrition
- Exercise
- Personal hygiene
- Mental well-being
- Substance misuse
- Active Flag Applications
- Participation in Active Week

Approaches and Methodologies

Many SPHE skills and attitudes are “caught” by the children within the school environment. Teaching will start from and build upon the children’s current knowledge, understanding, skills, language, experience, concerns and interests. Wherever possible, contexts for learning will be relevant to the children and make use of actual situations and current issues.

There will a high degree of active participation by children, and active learning techniques should be extensively used:

- Games, such as co-operative games, circle time games and parachute games, will be used appropriately.
- Appropriate use will be made of drama & role-play
- Music may be played to create different ambiances appropriate to the task in hand and to enhance learning.
- Organisation and management in the classroom will offer children opportunities for working individually and collaboratively in pairs and groups.
- Circle time will be an important vehicle for providing the above.
- Use of external speakers/visitors who are specialists in their own fields
- Dental nurse visits to classroom to discuss healthy eating, healthy drinking, cleaning teeth and regular visits to the dentist.
- Local Garda (when available) to talk to pupils about safe use of the internet and social media
- Engaging experts for both pupils and parents talks on safety on internet and prevention of cyberbullying
- Information and communication technologies/ websites.

Skills Development

1. Emotional literacy

Emotional literacy is the ability to recognise, understand, deal with, and appropriately express emotions. Children need to understand the part emotions play in human experience and actions. In order to be emotionally literate, they need to develop the following skills:

- Recognising, naming and describing feelings
- Understanding and empathising with the feelings of others
- Managing one's own feelings
- Responding appropriately to the feelings of others
- Communicating effectively
- Being an effective listener
- Working with others
- Improving one's own learning and performance
- Problem Solving

2. Communication

- Reading
- Speaking

- Listening
- Questioning
- Discussion
- Debating
- Writing

Children's Methods of Recording Their Work

Children's methods of recording their work in SPHE will vary according to the precise nature of the task and the stage of development of the child in terms of his/her ability and age.

Children's recording methods may include:

- drawings
- annotated drawings
- charts
- show me copies
- symbols
- models
- graphs
- tables
- written observations
- explanations
- all these may include the use of I.T

Assessment

Much of the assessment in the area of SPHE will be informal and formative, rather than diagnostic or summative.

Short-term achievement can be evaluated by monitoring classroom and school behaviour, achievements and developments

- Teacher observation: Teacher-designed tests and tasks Specific tasks can be used to ascertain a child's ability to apply particular skills in different situations.
- The ability of the child to co-operate and work in groups or to work independently
- The informal interactions between the child and adults and between the child and other children
- Physical and emotional maturity
- Positive attitudes displayed towards themselves and towards others
- Confidence and competence at taking on responsibilities in the school life
- The quality of presentation of work
- The participation and interest of the child in a variety of activities.
- Self-Assessment by Children -Children are encouraged to engage in assessing their own progress in SPHE and to reflect on their learning.
- Peer assessment

Medium-term objectives may be monitored when pupils have progressed (as above) to senior levels of the school and through feedback from post-primary schools.

Long-term objectives will be largely assessed through general feedback from health services and other social data.

Children with additional needs

The SPHE programme aims to meet the needs of all children in the school. This will be achieved by teachers varying the pace, content and methodologies to ensure learning for all pupils. Evidence of this differentiated approach will be recorded in teacher's planning documentation. To ensure that the learning experiences are effective, positive and relevant to all pupils, the programme will be developmental, accessible and be appropriate to the age and maturity of the pupils.

As maturity is not always determined by chronological age, teachers have to be alert to the personal and emotional circumstances of each individual pupil.

Teachers will have to be aware of, and take into account, the variety of existing pupil knowledge, the different attitudes and beliefs and the pupils' capacity to understand the issues. This will be particularly important in relation to children with additional needs where physical development may outstrip emotional maturity. Members of the Learning Support Team and Resource Teachers will positively support the work of the class teacher. The requirements of children with additional needs will be taken into consideration when planning class lessons and related activities.

It is also recognised that any child, may need additional support in areas of self-esteem, friendships, safe play, personal safety etc. In this respect, additional support may be provided to any individual child, or group of children as seen fit.

For children in The Special class for Autism, it is recognised that SPHE is a particularly important subject and it is reflected in individual plans.

Children who experience bereavement or loss, serious illness or other major personal situations are supported and consideration is given to meeting their individual needs in the most appropriate manner.

Equality of Participation and Access:

We view the SPHE programme as playing a key role in ensuring equality of opportunities for all children.

Timetable:

Teachers will decide the timetabling of Stay Safe lessons and a letter will be sent to parents prior to the commencement of these lessons.

Child Protection

The school follows the DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, which are based on Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. Each teacher has a copy of our policy on Child Protection and a copy is available to parents on the school website/ in the office

Staff Development

Staff development will take place on a whole-school, group or individual basis depending on identified needs, concerns, interests and opportunities. From time to time facilitators visit the school to address the whole school or to meet with individual teachers.

Parental Involvement

SPHE is a shared responsibility between family and school.

Parents are made aware of content objectives that deal with 'sensitive' issues before the lessons and will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school. Copies of the school plan for SPHE are available from the office.

Community Links

We value the contribution which members of the local community can make towards furthering the aims and objectives of SPHE in our school. The community Garda, medical persons, people of other cultures and backgrounds, members of local community groups and the media have much to offer in supporting the SPHE programme.

Visits to places of worship, local government and business premises, sports centres, health centres, libraries, museums, environmental centres, places of natural beauty, galleries, theatres, etc. can greatly enrich the SPHE Programme.

We will avail of the services of statutory bodies such as the HSE and An Garda Síochána, as required.

Success Criteria

Success achieved will depend on thorough preparation of teachers' work and consistently following procedures outlined in the plan. Indications of success will come through positive feedback from the main stakeholders in our school community- teachers, parents, pupils and the local community and from the second-level schools attended by our past pupils. However, in many situations, success can only be measured in the medium and long-term by the way in which children mature and live their lives.

Implementation

This plan has been formulated by the staff of our school. It will be supported, developed and implemented by teaching and non-teaching staff members alike. The school Principal will coordinate its progression.

Review

In order to ensure optimal implementation of the SPHE Programme in our school this plan will be reviewed on a three-year basis. Those involved in the review will include teachers and the Board of Management.

The Principal and the staff will be responsible for the co-ordination of this review.

Ratification and Communication

Following ratification by the Board of Management, this plan will be circulated to all staff members. Copies of the policy are available from the office.

Ratified :



