



Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy

Introduction

Dominican College Wicklow is a voluntary second - level, girls-only school, with a Catholic Dominican ethos under the trusteeship of Le Chéile. The SPHE Policy has been developed following consultation between staff, parents, Principal and Board of Management. In this policy document the term 'parent' is taken to include 'guardian'. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) 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.

Policy Context

This policy is informed by:

- The Mission Statement of Dominican College Wicklow
- The RSE Policy
- The Pastoral Care Policy
- The Code of Behaviour
- The Child Protection Policy
- The Internet Acceptable Use Policy
- The Mobile Device Management Policy
- The SEN Policy
- The Guidance Plan
- The Education Act, 1998 requires that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them

The school adopts and adheres to the DES Child Protection procedures and has a Child Protection policy with the Principal as Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. The SPHE Policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy. Where a child protection concern is raised, the procedures outlined in the schools Child Protection Policy are followed.

The Aims of SPHE in Dominican College Wicklow

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.

A. Our Mission

The Dominican motto 'TRUTH' is the inspiration of our work. The mission statement of Dominican College Wicklow (DCW) is: *Finding 'Truth' through the education of the Whole Person*. Dominican education is concerned with the education of the whole person. Strong emphasis is placed on each student attaining her full potential academically, but care is also taken to ensure that each student benefits from an enriching all



round education. Strong emphasis is placed on each student attaining her full potential through an enriching, comprehensive education.

In an atmosphere of trust and friendliness, students are encouraged to develop responsibility, initiative, personal growth and leadership so as to help them take their place in society as mature citizens. We help students to make sound judgements. That is done through developing a love for truth which will not be satisfied with superficial values. The values of justice, peace, reconciliation and mutual respect are paramount.

B. Our Vision

The SPHE Programme has developed out of a vision for holistic education of the individual, providing a myriad of valuable life skills which is entirely compatible with the Ethos of Dominican College Wicklow and its commitment to education of the whole student in a Christian, caring and supportive environment.

1. Students in DCW are encouraged to consider and assess different viewpoints in relation to issues of morality. The experience gained through the working out of this policy and through respecting the needs of minority groups and individuals enriches the whole life of the school.

2. The school gives students the opportunity to explore the humanities, sciences, arts, Business Studies and STEM subjects. In addition we provide Religious, moral and physical education in order to meet our statutory obligations under the Education Act (1998) and our founding objectives of supporting students in achieving their full academic potential and preparing them for participation in civic society and working life.

3. A code of behaviour has been published after consultation with students, parents & staff and the following excerpts illustrate how the ethos of the school operates on a daily basis:

- The Code which is linked to the Dominican Ethos is based on the principles of respect, equality, cooperation and natural justice, has regard to the rights and responsibilities of management, teachers, students and parents.
- Cooperative, positive, kind behaviours are the norm in DCW and such behaviours are expected and fostered throughout the school.

4. An important facet of Dominican education is the recognition and acceptance of the difference in ability and gifts and each student. Within this broad objective we aim to:

- Provide a supportive environment in which students are enabled to grow to maturity
- Enable students to develop a healthy self-esteem
- Provide the educational environment and facilities to enable students to reach their full potential
- Provide a calm yet stimulating learning atmosphere, which encourages respect for self and others and enables students to grow in freedom.

The teaching of SPHE in Dominican College Wicklow is influenced by our mission statement and characteristic spirit.



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C. Definition of SPHE

S.P.H.E. is a programme that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and others, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

D. Aims of our SPHE Programme:

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E. Rationale for Policy

Dominican College Wicklow 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)

Wellbeing - SPHE provides opportunities for students to develop personal and social skills which foster integrity, self-confidence and self-esteem while nurturing sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others.

F. 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

G. Roles and Responsibilities in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Dominican College Wicklow 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 Trustees of Dominican College Wicklow, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Health and Children.

The students fill in a reflection and evaluation in their work books after every lesson.



1. Board of Management

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

2. Principal and Deputy Principal

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

3. SPHE Facilitator

The SPHE facilitator will work with the SPHE 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.

The facilitator 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.

4. 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 will attend SPHE Department meetings and In-service training.

H. Outline of the Programme and Teaching Methods:

The S.P.H.E. curriculum is delivered in ten modules at Junior Certificate. The Department of Education and Science recognises that each school has flexibility within this syllabus to plan and order the delivery of the SPHE Programme according to school or class needs and circumstances.

I. The 'Ten Modules' in the Junior Cycle are:

- Belonging and Integrating
- Self-management: a sense of purpose
- Communication skills
- Physical health
- Friendship
- Relationships and sexuality education (RSE)
- Emotional health
- Influences and decisions
- Substance use
- Personal safety

J. Senior Cycle: The SPHE Programme at Senior Level

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



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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. Senior Cycle SPHE builds on the students' prior learning in early to mid-adolescence and addresses and examines social, personal and health issues and concerns from mid to late adolescence / early adulthood reflecting increased awareness of a changing society.

Building on the Junior Cycle programme cross-curricular links, as relevant, should be emphasised so that the students develop an 'appreciation of the integrated nature of their lives and the value of different perspectives'.

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

K. Timetabling:

SPHE is timetabled for one period a week for each of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year class groups. Provision for SPHE in Transition year, 5th year, and 6th year the provision for SPHE is incorporated into the non-examination Religious Education, PE and Guidance programmes.

L. 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. The SPHE class environment will foster respect for the privacy of individual students and will be a safe learning environment for all students.

The methodologies employed will include:

- Artwork
- Brainstorming
- Case studies
- Debates
- Games – Icebreakers
- Games – Simulation
- Group discussions
- Narrative expression



- Project work
- Reflection
- Role play
- Visualisation
- Walking debates

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

- 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

M. 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 framework, in keeping with the school ethos.

N. Confidentiality:

At the start 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), Deputy Designated Liaison Person (Deputy Principal) or to the Pastoral Care team.

O. Teaching Resources:

- HSE workbooks,
- Videos,
- Images,
- Case studies,
- Worksheets,
- Flashcards

P. Cross-curricular Links:

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

- Wellbeing
- Art
- Biology
- Guidance Department



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- Wellbeing
- Art
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- Guidance Department



- Home Economics
- Junior Science
- Pastoral Care
- Physical Education
- Religious Education

Q. Teacher Training:

Teachers of SPHE attend continuing professional development (CPD) courses offered in the region. 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 on-going development of the SPHE programme. A record of courses attended can be found in the SPHE Department folder.

R. 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.

Dominican College Wicklow 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 Dominican College Wicklow 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.

S. Student Participation:

SPHE is mandatory for all students who attend DCW.

T. Parents:

Dominican College Wicklow acknowledges the role of parents / guardians as the primary educators of their children. The Programme seeks to support parents in this challenging task.

The Parents Council will, as appropriate, support the SPHE programme via invitations to visiting speakers.



U. Assessment, Record Keeping and Reporting:

Written work, reflections and on-going class participation is used by the teacher to assess student engagement with the programme. 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-teacher meetings.

V. Whole School Support for SPHE:

Dominican College Wicklow is a health promoting school which supports the ideals of the SPHE programme. This includes:

- Prefect induction and training
- First Year induction Programme
- Ember Leaders
- Pastoral Care Programme
- Guidance Department
- Counselling
- Mentor Programme
- Internet Safety Module
- Meditation and Mindfulness Programmes
- Extra-curricular Physical Education Programme
- Evening talks for parents/guardians as organised by school/by parents

W. Monitoring, Evaluating and Reviewing the SPHE programme:

Senior Management and SPHE teachers are committed to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the programme. Specifically important to the SPHE Programme are:

- a) student feedback: feedback is sought from the students by the teachers; a confidential survey of students, administered by the teachers, is conducted once the year are completed. The survey questions are based on the TRUST pack survey. Collated results may be made available by the SPHE teachers to Senior Management for the purpose of School Self Evaluation
 - b) staff review and feedback
 - c) parental feedback, including at parent-teacher meetings and Parents' Association meetings.
- Feedback is sought as part of our School Self-Evaluation process and helps to inform future planning.

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

Signature (Chairperson):

Date of next review: September 2020