

Loreto Secondary School, St Michael's, Navan, Co Meath.



SPHE/ RSE POLICY.

(This policy should be taken in conjunction with the school's overall Well-being Policy.)

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Section 1.

Introduction: Well-being and the Curriculum

Wellbeing in Loreto St Michaels is about young people feeling confident, happy, healthy and connected.

The short course in **Junior Cycle SPHE/RSE** provides learning opportunities which will help to develop these attributes thereby contributing significantly to the school's well-being programme in Junior Cycle. (NCCA Curriculum online). The Sexual Education part of Junior RSE is covered by class teachers, with a talk given by a community nurse and guided by Dept. of Education and Science Guidelines, the JCT, the NCCA and by the HSE. Junior Cycle SPHE/RSE comes under the Wellbeing banner.

Senior Cycle SPHE/RSE

The Senior Cycle includes 20 lessons of SPHE over a three-year period. The relationships section is covered during one of the allotted Religion class times in Fifth Year and Sixth Year and is a four to six week module from Jan to Feb. The Sexual Education part of Senior RSE is covered by class teachers, with a course given by a community nurse and guided by Dept. of Education and Science Guidelines, the NCCA and by the HSE.

TY Well-being and SPHE/RSE are modular courses designed by the class teacher using the above guidelines.

Section 2

Definition of Social, Personal and Health Education.

SPHE provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. Students learn how to participate as active and responsible adults in the personal and social dimensions of society and make responsible decisions which respect their dignity and that of others. Every teacher and staff member in Loreto St Michaels, every class and extra curricular activity can offer opportunities for enhancing the personal and social development of the student. SPHE is the main medium through which the RSE programme is delivered at Junior Cycle and again at Senior level supported by the whole school climate and cross-curricular opportunities.

Definition of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. Relationships and Sexuality Education seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours, within a moral, spiritual and social framework. Parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media deliver this education consciously, and unconsciously. At all stages where child protection concerns arise the schools' Child Protection Guidelines (DES) will be followed. However, teachers will strive to create a safe learning environment for all students. Teachers make students aware that they have a duty of care towards them. Students are encouraged to find each SPHE class relaxing and enjoyable, but are also aware that a teacher must pass on information shared by students which concerns them.

Loreto St Michaels recognises that parents/guardians are the primary educators and home is the natural environment in which Relationships and Sexuality Education should take place.

Section 3

Relationship of RSE to Social Personal and Health Education

The aims of an RSE programme, i.e. the provision of opportunities for young people to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways which help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way, can only be done through a full Social, Personal and Health Education programme.

By providing RSE through an SPHE programme, we teach young people personal skills to increase their personal effectiveness, so that in the context of their own lives they are able to implement informed decisions in relation to their own sexuality and relationships to others.

Section 4

The aims of SPHE in Loreto St Michaels are as follows:

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

- to enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
- 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 health and well-being.

Aims of the Loreto St Michaels RSE Programme.

In this school, RSE is located within the framework of SPHE. The specific aims of the RSE programme are:

- 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 relationships with others.
- To promote knowledge of and respect for human reproduction.
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Section 5

SPHE and the Whole School.

The processes of all teaching and learning have implications for personal and social development. The ways in which members of the staff relate to one another and to the students, and the quality of relationships between the students themselves, form the foundation for personal and social development in a school. Therefore, every teacher and staff member, every class and extracurricular activity in Loreto St Michaels has offered and

continues to offer opportunities for enhancing the personal and social development of the student. A supportive school environment at Loreto St Michaels is essential if SPHE is to be effective. In such an environment,

- People feel valued.
- Self-esteem is fostered.
- Respect, tolerance and fairness are evident.
- High expectations and standards are promoted.
- There is support for those with difficulties.
- Open communication is the norm.
- Effort is recognised and rewarded.
- Uniqueness and difference are valued.
- Conflict is handled constructively.
- Initiative and creativity are encouraged.
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted. (NCCA)

The principles of fair play, respect, tolerance and reward for effort must permeate the whole school climate; they cannot be compartmentalised into SPHE. The development of an appreciation for learning, respect and caring for self and others, a sense of belonging and a sense of social responsibility—these are tasks of the whole school community. Curricular provision for SPHE at Loreto St Michael's contributes to and benefits from a supportive school environment.

Section 6

Links with Wellbeing Indicators.

The SPHE/ RSE course follows the six well being indicators that are central to developing and measuring wellbeing. These are : Awareness; Respected; Being Connected; Being Resilient; Being Responsible; Being Active.

1. Awareness.

Year 1 – Moving up, coping with change, bullying, life balance, body care, healthy eating and exercise, self esteem, body changes,being inclusive, setting goals.

Year 2 - Looking after myself, setting goals, staying well, decision making, communicating, substance abuse, gender identity, healthy relationships,from conception to birth, feelings and moods, coping with loss, living with mental ill-health, managing myself.

Year 3 - Being me, setting goals, eating and staying well, taking care online, substance awareness, respect and boundaries in relationships, sexual health.

2. Being Respected.

Year 1 - Joining a new group, bullying,self esteem,respect and inclusiveness,friendship, feelings, dealing with tough times.

Year 2 - Expressing myself, bullying and cyber-bullying, gender identity, managing relationships.

Year 3 - Respect, setting boundaries, problems in relationships.

3. Being Resilient.

Year 1 - Coping with change, joining a new group, awareness around bullying, balance in life, self esteem, changes during adolescence, respect, inclusiveness, positive mental health, dealing with stress.

Year 2 - Looking after myself, decision making, expressing myself, dealing with conflict, boundaries in relationships, awareness of substance abuse, roles and responsibilities.

Year 3 - Planning for effective study, dealing with conflict and criticism, roles and responsibilities, boundaries in relationships, mental health, dealing with loss, awareness of substance abuse.

4. Being Connected.

Year 1 - Moving up, joining a new group, exercise, being unique, being inclusive, setting goals, friendships, feelings, setting goals, dealing with tough times.

Year 2 - Setting goals, decision making, communication online, being part of the community, awareness of cyber and other bullying, good mental health, feelings and coping with loss.

Year 3 - Staying well, dealing with conflict, roles and responsibilities at home, body image, sexual health, relationship problems, responsibilities of pregnancy and parenting, good mental health.

5. Being Responsible.

Year 1 - Coping with change, balance in life, healthy eating, body care and changes, respecting myself and others, friendship, positive mental health, dealing with stress, reproduction.

Year 2 - Looking after myself physically and mentally, good decision making particularly in areas of drugs and alcohol, being part of the community, healthy relationships and dealing with stress and loss.

Year 3 - Being me, setting goals, organising my time, eating well, awareness of substance abuse, body image, relationships, sexual health, mental health, responsibilities of pregnancy and parenting.

6. Being Active.

Year 1 - Life balance, exercise.

Year 2 - My part in the community.

Year 3 - Staying well, alcohol and decisions.

Section 7

Key Skills and Statements of Learning

The promotion of the six key skills within teaching and learning also has an important part to play in supporting student wellbeing.

The Junior Cycle key skills are : Being Creative; Staying Well, Communicating; Working with Others; Managing Myself; and Managing Information.

Section 8

Teachers of SPHE/RSE

Teachers directly involved in an SPHE programme in a school have a particular responsibility and receive particular support. Teachers assigned to SPHE must have an

understanding of and a familiarity with the methodologies associated with education in this area. Where possible these teachers have received inservice on this. Those involved in the SPHE programme in Loreto St Michael's receive continuing support from their colleagues, from the principal and Board of Management, and from a range of other agencies that are in a position to offer in-career support. Close links are kept between the pastoral care system in the school and those involved in the teaching of SPHE.

Guest and expert speakers enhance the quality of the provision and are used in addition to, not instead of, a planned programme of RSE.

Section 9

Parents/ Guardians and the RSE programme.

Parents are informed about the content of the programme before starting it each year. A link is also sent that contains the curriculum content. The Draft Guidelines for RSE (NCCA, June 1995) state that Social Personal and Health Education is "spiral, developmental in nature and age appropriate in content and methodology". The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern.

It is the right of parents/ guardians to withdraw their child from the RSE module of the SPHE programme. Parents/guardians will be sent a message via the school app to all parents informing them that students will be attending RSE as part of the SPHE programme. Parents must notify the principal in advance of their wish to have their child withdrawn from the programme. Parents are welcome to make an appointment to contact the school and discuss the nature of their concerns. If the parent chooses to withdraw their child from RSE, they must put this in writing. The first option is that parents may choose to pick up their students for the duration of the class. If this is not an option, the student will be accommodated outside of the SPHE class until the block of RSE is completed. The student will be given other SPHE work to complete during this time.

Section 10

SPHE/ RSE at Junior Cycle Level

The 100 hour SPHE short course builds on the Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education Framework which SPHE teachers currently use to plan their SPHE programme in Junior Cycle. By choosing to include this short course in the school's Well-being programme in Junior Cycle, students have a dedicated space and time to learn about themselves, caring for themselves and others and making informed decisions for their health and wellbeing.

The learning outcomes provide a clear focus for student learning as well as teacher planning. There is particular emphasis on the importance of student agency and engagement in the learning process as key to learning in the affective domain.

We, in Loreto St Michael's, are currently working with the current and the updated (2023) SPHE syllabus and providing over 400 hours contact time (one hour class per week) for

students over the 3 years of Junior Cycle. However, this curriculum has been adapted to take cognisance of the Well-being Indicators. These are : Being connected; Staying resilient; Being responsible; Feeling respected and respecting others; Being aware and staying active.

The main themes covered at Junior Cycle over the three years are

First Year 2024- 5	Second - Third Year 2024-5
• Understanding Myself and Others	• Minding myself and others
• Making Healthy Choices	• Who am I?
• Relationship and Sexuality;	• RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education)
• Emotional Wellbeing	• My Mental health.

The Updated SPHE Curriculum (The 2023 updated Junior Cycle SPHE course provides 100 hours of learning (an increase from 70 hours) over the three years of junior cycle. Students starting first year in September 2023 will be studying [the updated \(2023\) specification](https://ncca.ie/en/updates-and-events/latest-news/2023/may/updated-junior-cycle-sphe-curriculum/))

<https://ncca.ie/en/updates-and-events/latest-news/2023/may/updated-junior-cycle-sphe-curriculum/>

https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/ca8f8975-50ca-4dc3-bba5-a04e25b4f978/JC_SPHE_Short_Course_2023.pdf

<https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/curriculum-developments/social-personal-and-health-education-sphe/>

CBA :A CBA in either Second or Third year is advised based on two or more of the strands taught in SPHE class.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Ahmalh3jyj2PLcdIoN2U51eFgM4sUnn59ExnCDmIT9A/edit#slide=id.p>

The RSE programme (Relationships and Sexual Education)

RSE is delivered at Junior Cycle level over a 4-6 week period by teachers in SPHE classes. This programme is supported by resources from the PDST and NCCA.

RSE Topics by Year Group.

First Year: Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships- in real life and online. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. From Puberty to Parenthood.

Second Year: the nature of friendship- having and being a friend; me and my family now; respecting myself and others;appreciating the nature of human sexuality;looking after my reproductive health. How do Media influence me?

Third Year: Body image; Respect in relationships; Setting boundaries in relationships; Sexual health, relationship problems and the responsibilities of pregnancy and parenting.

Section 11

SPHE in Transition Year .

Module :Wellbeing - Relationships & Sexuality Education

Duration of Module:14 weeks

Aims: Gaining an understanding of 'Being-Well' physically, mentally & spiritually.

To make students aware of the importance of understanding our own values & beliefs.

To promote a healthy relationship with ourselves.

To gain an understanding of STIs and contraception.

Group work, presentations, self directed reflection.

Group work, presentations, self directed reflection.

TRUST - HSE

Self reflection - group presentation

HSE TRUST pack, HSE websites on sexual health.

Section 12

Senior Cycle SPHE/RSE.

The Learning Outcomes of RSE at Senior Cycle include:

- Building awareness of and skills on how to navigate certain situations at relationship level.
- Building awareness of the importance of choice in relationships.
- Empowering students with appropriate language.
- RSE and the law in Ireland.
- Providing information about where further available resources, information and support may be found.
- The importance of reflection on what has been discussed.

The framework is built around five areas of learning:

- Mental health.
- Gender studies.

- Substance use.
- Relationships and sexuality education.
- Physical activity and nutrition.

The topics covered are:

Fifth Year : Healthy Relationships, Self esteem, communication, assertive communication, dealing with feelings, Keeping your cool, and living with loss. human sexuality, accepting sexual orientations, implications of sexual activity, human reproduction and fertility, contraception, sexual harassment and assault.

Sixth Year: The influence of self esteem, understanding and communicating our boundaries, when we feel hurt, loving relationships, intimacy, marriage and life support, sexual orientation, the Law and sexual assault in Ireland, without consent, sexual health, responsible parenthood and life support.

Section 13

Student Voice.

Students are surveyed after completion of the RSE programme annually to help with more effective planning the following year.

The SSE Coordinator and the Well-being Coordinator conduct regular Google surveys with students of all years on topics discussed in SPHE classes.

Students are encouraged to reflect after talks given by experts in this area. Areas that are asked to reflect on are :

- What were the key messages taken from these lessons?
- Was there anything that surprised you about these topics?
- Is there anything you would like added to future lessons?

Section 14

Conclusion

‘ Well-being matters not simply because it leads to better educational outcomes or can influence young people’s outcomes as adults. Well-being matters in the here and now’

Wellbeing Guidelines, NCCA, 2017.

Supplementary Resources used :

- <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/SPHE-RSE-toolkit/Resources-for-learning-and-teaching-in-SPHE-RSE/>
 RSE JUNIOR CYCLE RESOURCE.pdf
- https://jct.ie/wellbeing/social_personal_and_health_education/resources
- The Education Act 1998
- [Wellbeing Guidelines](#) NCCA
- [Relationships and Sexuality Policy Guidelines](#)
- [Junior Cycle Social, Personal and Health Education](#)
-  **CamScanner 03-14-2023 08.12.pdf Trust Booklet.**
- The Looking at Our Schools (LAOS) document.
- Whole School Evaluation, Management, Leadership and Learning Report, St Michaels Loreto Navan, 2020.