

**SCOIL MHUIRE AGUS ÍDE
NEWCASTLEWEST,
CO. LIMERICK.**

SPHE POLICY

MISSION STATEMENT

Our aim and purpose in Scoil Mhuire agus Íde is to help our students to take their place in society as educated, mature and committed Christians. We want our school to be not only a centre of academic excellence but a caring community where personal faith is nurtured and developed.

In Scoil Mhuire agus Íde we aim

- To create a caring environment in which everyone recognises the value of each individual and to encourage an awareness of, and a response to, the needs of others.
- To foster an appetite for learning and to develop self-discipline, initiative, responsibility and perseverance.
- To involve the students in the life-long process of education and to ensure that everyone achieves some degree of success in life.
- To value all kinds of achievement, and to learn to cope with success and failure.

OUR SCHOOL MOTTO IS
"NÍ NEART GO CUR LE CHÉILE"

Our mission statement outlines our educational philosophy in full. In brief we aspire to help our students to take their place in society as educated, mature and committed Christians. We want our school to be not only a centre of academic excellence but also a caring community where personal faith is nurtured and developed.

We aim to create a caring environment in which everyone recognises the value of each individual and encourages an awareness of, and a response to, the needs of others. We aim to foster an appetite for learning and to develop self-discipline, initiative, responsibility and perseverance. We also aim to involve our students in the life-long process of education and to ensure that everyone achieves some degree of success in life. We value all kinds of achievement and we work to promote a school culture, which values diversity and nurtures an ethos of respect for self, others, and the wider community.

DEFINITION OF SPHE

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

THE AIMS OF SPHE

- To enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfillment 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.

HOW SPHE LINKS WITH OUR SCHOOL'S ETHOS

The SPHE programme offered to our students will provide them with the necessary skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, options, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and about the way they live their lives. This will be done in the context of a Christian caring environment.

The school acknowledges that the home is the natural environment for the personal, social and health development of children, the Education Act (1998) emphasises that schools also have a responsibility to promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. This responsibility has always been recognised by Scoil Mhuire agus Íde and is evident in the many current provisions and structures, pastoral and otherwise, which are outlined in Appendix A. Our SPHE programme is seen to build on this existing commitment to the care and development of all the students in our care.

OUTLINE OF PROGRAMME CONTENT

The Curriculum for SPHE is presented in ten modules each of which appears in each year of the three year cycle as outlined in Appendix B. The emphasis will be on developing skills, understanding, attitudes and values important to all these areas.

The ten modules are:

- Belonging and Integrating
- Self-Management - a sense of purpose
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendships
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Emotional health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

The Department of Education and Science recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE programme in harmony with the students' needs and the school's resources.

TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

Because the programme is primarily skills based, teaching methods must, of necessity, be of an experimental nature with an emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods are, by and large, child centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student. To facilitate this type of teaching and the convenient use of resource materials it is hoped that the school will be able to make available a designated SPHE classroom.

The Pastoral Team in the school have also drawn up and designed a Resource Pack for teachers of SPHE that outlines the various approaches to teaching SPHE.

A Transition Year Personal Development Programme, 'Adolescents in Transition', has also been devised by a member of staff as part of his postgraduate studies for use with TY classes.

TIMETABLING

Due to the nature of SPHE and in consideration of the fact that it is only available to students once a week, the school will endeavour, whenever possible, that it is not timetabled last class in the evening or last class before lunch.

Best practice suggests that a specific teacher is allocated to a specific class for the three year Junior Cert. Programme. Where a change of teacher is unavoidable it is recommended that the teacher have the class for another subject.

The class atmosphere must be one of respect for the privacy of the individual and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. SPHE will be allocated one class period for First, Second, Third and Transition Years beginning with First Years in September 2006.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT, TRAINING AND RESOURCES

The value placed on SPHE by the school will be evident by the commitment on the part of management to develop a core of trained SPHE teachers. In-Career Development is an integral part of this programme and management are responsible for responding to the relevant training needs of SPHE teachers. Teachers should be timetabled for SPHE on a negotiated basis. As part of the core curriculum SPHE will have a budgetary allocation in line with its stage of development, its teaching methodologies and timetabled allocation. The school management is committed to the appointment of an SPHE Co-ordinator within the overall Posts of Responsibility allocation in the school.

PARTICIPATION/SENSITIVE ISSUES

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cert Curriculum offered in this school. Relationships and Sexuality is one module of the Programme. Each parent/guardian has the right to withdraw their child from some or all RSE classes but are encouraged to provide alternative

RSE at home. It will be necessary for parents/guardians of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school management for the welfare of their child at these times and to inform the Principal before the end of September of the child's first year in the school.

Where children are withdrawn from RSE, the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of school content passed on to them by other students.

Class discussion will be of a general nature and will not be directed at any one person in accordance with agreed class ground rules (See Appendix C). Inappropriate questions will not be countenanced by the teacher. As SMI is a co-ed school the policy development committee recommends that management, where possible, work towards a gender balance in the SPHE teaching team.

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the needs of our students will always be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. The teacher may also, if appropriate, inform the class of external supports pertinent to the subject matter, taking the school ethos into account.

While an atmosphere of trust is a pre-requisite of SPHE class, the legal limits of confidentiality must always be observed. All SPHE teachers should be aware of the school's Confidentiality Statement (Appendix D). Accordingly, anything discussed in the SPHE class is confidential unless information is revealed which suggests there is serious risk to any student or another person. In the case of reportage the person who revealed the information will always be consulted and it is therefore important that students should be informed of these limits before making a disclosure.

THE ROLE OF VISITING SPEAKERS

Visiting speakers are seen as complementing the SPHE programme. The SPHE teacher will agree with the Principal, the suitability of guest speakers prior to their invitation. All guest speakers will be made aware of and will be requested to comply with the SPHE Policy, which is in line with the ethos of the school. The content of all guest presentations will

be negotiated with the relevant SPHE teacher before delivery to students. It is the school policy that under normal circumstances a teacher will be present during presentations by outside guest speakers.

HOW PARENTS/GUARDIANS WILL BE INFORMED

The SPHE syllabus, core resource materials and this policy document will be available in the school if parents/guardians wish to view it. Parents/guardians will be informed of any substantial changes in the programme made, from time to time, by the school itself or by the Department of Education and Science.

HOW STAFF WILL BE INFORMED

SPHE teachers will be provided with a copy of the school's SPHE policy and will be made aware of any substantial changes that occur, by the school's SPHE Co-ordinator. A copy of the SPHE policy will also be available along with all other school policy documents.

HOW STUDENTS WILL BE INFORMED

Students will be informed of the policy by their respective SPHE teachers.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THE SPHE PROGRAMME

The SPHE programme will be reviewed on a regular basis by the SPHE team. The opinions of students will be sought and included as part of these reviews. The school Principal will be informed of the outcomes of each review.

REVIEW OF THE SPHE POLICY

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis in line with the schedule of review of all school policies. Evaluation of this policy will, therefore, be ongoing.

Active from: 29th. August, 2006

Ratified by Board of Management on 10th. March, 2008

APPENDIX D

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

WHILE CONFIDENTIALITY BETWEEN SCHOOL COUNSELLOR, LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER, YEAR HEAD, CLASS TUTOR, SPHE TEACHER, SUBJECT TEACHER AND THE STUDENT IS A VERY GREY AREA, AND OFTEN OF ITS NATURE LIMITED, IT SHOULD, IN MOST CASES, BE POSSIBLE TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING CONTRACT WITH THE STUDENT:

“ANYTHING DISCUSSED BETWEEN US IS CONFIDENTIAL UNLESS INFORMATION IS REVEALED WHICH SUGGESTS THERE IS RISK TO YOU OR ANOTHER PERSON.

IN THE CASE OF REPORTAGE YOU WILL ALWAYS BE CONSULTED.”