Ennistymon Community School – SPHE Policy (Post-Primary)

Our Mission Statement

Ennistymon Community School recognises and respects the individual needs of our students and staff, strives to foster a caring, mutually respectful, safe, creative, positive, vibrant and inclusive learning environment. We endeavour to support the educational and holistic development of each student to enable them to realise their potential in partnership with the wider community.

Introduction

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a key component of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme at Ennistymon Community School. It provides students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, and values necessary to live confident, healthy, and responsible lives, both now and in the future.

Aims of SPHE

SPHE aims to:

- Promote student wellbeing, positive self-image, and resilience.
- Support students in developing respectful, empathetic, and safe relationships.
- Equip students with critical decision-making and communication skills.
- Enable students to explore and manage their health, emotions, sexuality, and social responsibilities.

Alignment with School Ethos

Our school promotes a culture of **respect, friendship, and personal development**—core values embedded in our School Self-Evaluation (SSE). SPHE aligns with these values by:

- Promoting student voice and self-awareness.
- Supporting a positive classroom atmosphere.
- Encouraging collaborative and reflective learning.

Timetabling & Curriculum Structure

- All Junior Cycle students receive one class period per week, totaling 100 hours over three years.
- SPHE is structured around four strands:
  1. Understanding Myself and Others
  2. Making Healthy Choices
  3. Relationships and Sexuality
  4. Emotional Wellbeing
- Three cross-cutting elements underpin delivery: Awareness, Dialogue, and Reflection & Action.
- RSE is integrated across all three years in line with DES guidelines.

Teaching & Learning Methodologies

SPHE uses a student-centered, active learning approach:
- Group and pair work, discussions, role play.
- Peer and self-assessment, reflective journals, and digital tasks.
- Use of multimedia (video/audio) and digital research tools.
- Lessons include co-created learning intentions and success criteria.

Assessment, Feedback & Reporting

- Formative Assessment: peer/self-assessment, check-ins, exit tickets, digital reflections, “3 Stars and a Wish”.
- Summative Assessment: Portfolio-based Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA) in Year 2 or 3 (three tasks or one Action Project).
- End-of-term teacher comments are included in the school report.
- Feedback is used to foster confidence and skill growth.

Inclusion, AEN & Differentiation

- SPHE lessons are differentiated using strategies like scaffolded worksheets, graphic organisers, and flexible grouping.
- SPHE teachers collaborate with the AEN Department to support students with additional needs.
- Digital tools are used for accessibility (e.g., visual/audio resources).
- Inclusion is a key theme in all strands, promoting respect for all backgrounds.

CPD and Professional Collaboration

- All SPHE teachers complete relevant OIDE and PDST CPD, e.g., BeSafe Webwise, Senior Cycle RSE, Consent Education.
- Teachers meet at least three times annually to review practice, share resources, and reflect (recorded in subject meeting minutes).
- Use of Microsoft Teams for sharing documents, reflections, and co-teaching strategies.

Digital Learning & Teams

- Digital citizenship and online safety are core themes (e.g., Webwise, “Forever” video, Connected Resource).
- Student access to Microsoft Teams allows for:
  - Digital portfolio submissions
  - Online discussions
  - Shared learning intentions
- Digital integration is aligned with the school’s Digital Learning Framework.

Student Voice

- Students co-create ground rules, choose reflection tasks, and co-construct success criteria.
- Student feedback on SPHE topics and activities is gathered at the end of each term and used to adapt plans.
- Class-based discussion fosters active engagement and ownership of learning.

Parental Engagement

- SPHE and RSE content is introduced to parents at First Year Orientation.
- Curriculum overview is shared via the school website and updated annually.
- Parents are encouraged to communicate concerns and offer feedback through parent-teacher meetings or pastoral care channels.

Role of External Visitors

- External contributors (e.g. counsellors, health professionals) must be:
  - Garda-vetted
  - Approved by school leadership
  - Supplementary to—not replacing—the classroom teacher
- Content is aligned with curriculum and teacher remains present during sessions.

Child Protection & Sensitive Issues

- All SPHE teachers are aware of their duties under the Children First Guidelines and DES Child Protection Procedures.
- Designated Liaison Person (DLP): Orla Conway
  Deputy DLP: Karen O Neill
- Sensitive topics (e.g., bereavement, consent) are handled in consultation with the guidance counsellor school chaplin and relevant policies.

SPHE Policy Links

This policy complements the following:

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- RSE Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Substance Use Policy

Whole-School Support & Cross-Curricular Links

SPHE connects with:

- CSPE (rights and responsibilities)
- Home Economics (nutrition and health)
- PE (physical wellbeing)
- Digital Literacy Programme
- Pastoral Care and Guidance

SPHE also supports our school's Cineáltas Action Plan and SSE targets.

Review & Evaluation

- Ongoing reflective practice at term-end and during subject planning meetings.