



St Gerald's DLS College
SPHE Plan and Procedures

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1.0: Mission Statement

The St. Gerald's DLS College learning community is committed to an education which fosters personal growth and self-worth. We aspire to educate, to be educated and to promote personal responsibility. We aim to work together in a positive, respectful, caring and just environment. We encourage students to become involved in a variety of activities outside the curriculum. Life skills are reinforced through participation in activities such as music, debating, quizzes, drama, charitable fundraising and sporting pursuits. Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is fundamental to the development of the required skills in students in order for them to participate in such activities. It assists in their personal growth and development and allows for students to increase their self-esteem, as well as their care for each other.

2.0: Rationale

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

3.0: The Aims of SPHE

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

1. Enable the students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
2. Promote self-esteem and self-confidence.
3. Enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision making.
4. Provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
5. Promote physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.

We see these aims as contributing towards the school's commitment to foster personal growth and self-worth, as well as contributing to the creation of an environment that is positive, respectful, caring and just for all. The school recognises that the home is the natural environment for children to grow, develop and mature into adults. However, it also accepts as stated in paragraph 9 sub section (d) of the Education Act 1998, its own role in supporting parents in this work and in fostering the social, moral, spiritual and personal development of the students. SPHE supports the fulfilment of this vital role.



4.0: Programme content

The curriculum for SPHE is presented in ten modules. The Department of Education and Skills recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE Programme most suitable for the students and the school.

The ten modules are:

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

*The above are fleshed out in greater detail in teachers own specific Schemes of Work.

5.0: Teaching Methodologies used

As the SPHE programme is primarily skills-based, teaching methods are of an experiential nature with an emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods are child centred and are appropriate to the age and educational needs of the student. The class atmosphere is one of respect for the privacy of each student and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. SPHE is timetabled for one 40 minute class per week for 1st, 2nd and 3rd year.

6.0: Staff Development and Training

The Board of Management provides the necessary resources to support the SPHE programme on a continuous basis. School management encourages and facilitates teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of the SPHE programme. SPHE have an understanding of, and a familiarity with the methodologies associated with education in this area. Teaching methods are discussed at the subject meetings and the preferred teaching methods used are up to the individual teacher. All SPHE teachers link with each



other throughout the year to support each other and to discuss strategies. There is a strong emphasis on experiential learning in the SPHE classroom and teachers work together to plan and organise teaching methods that allow for such learning. Examples of some of the methods used are:

1. group activities and projects
2. pair work
3. class discussion
4. debates
5. guest speakers
6. watching relevant videos/dvds/documentaries/web-links
7. research and class projects

7.0: Resources for SPHE

The department is developing a shared resource folder, which will be accessible to all SPHE teachers. The book used is *Minding Me*, which comes with many additional resources such as videos, quizzes and games, audio tracks of case studies and web-links.

8.0: Classroom Issues

8.1: Participation

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is one module of the programme. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from some or all of the RSE classes but parents are then encouraged to provide alternative RSE at home. The school will respect this choice if such a situation was to arise. However, it will be necessary for the parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with the school principal for the welfare of their child at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE, the school cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students. Parents wishing to withdraw their child from RSE must inform the principal of their decision in writing during the first month of the new academic year, otherwise the student will participate in the RSE classes.



8.2: Sensitive Issues

Class discussions will be of a general nature, and will not be personally focused. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by a teacher in class. The SPHE teacher may exercise his or her own judgement in deciding whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. This will be done in harmony with the ethos of the school. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor, the Principal or the Deputy Principal.

8.3: Confidentiality

While an atmosphere of trust is pre-requisite of a SPHE class, limits of confidentiality must be observed. These limits are:

- Child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual, neglect)
- Intention to harm self or others
- Substance misuse
- Underage sexual intercourse
- SPHE teachers inform students of these limits at the beginning of the year and where possible, before making a disclosure.

9.0: Referral

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content and that, the personal, social and emotional needs of our students are responded to in a caring and supportive manner, where appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links within the school. As far as possible is done in negotiation with the student concerned. The teacher regularly reminds the class of external services relevant to the class material. This is done within the context of the ethos of St. Gerald's DLS College, SPHE teachers, where in doubt as to the course of action to take, are encouraged to discuss the issue with a senior member of staff without identifying the student unless completely necessary.



10.0: Visitors

Visiting speakers complement and support the SPHE programme in the school. Teachers inviting these speakers must:

1. Inform the principal in advance
2. Make the speaker aware of the SPHE policy and the ethos of the school
3. Agree the content of the presentation
4. Do preparatory and follow up work where possible
5. Remain with the class group during the visit.

11.0: Cross-curricular links

SPHE has links with many other subjects such as Home Economics, P.E, Religion, Guidance Counselling, English and Science.

12.0: Parental Involvement in SPHE

Parents are informed about the content of SPHE during our Open Evening. Parents are invited, by appointment to meet with SPHE teachers throughout the school year. Also, parents can meet with SPHE teachers at parent-teacher meetings.

13.0: Dissemination of Information to Staff

This SPHE plan outlining subject procedures is available to all staff.

14.0: Student Assessment and Homework

An Assessment for Learning approach is used in each lesson through group work, pair work, the use of case studies and peer assessment. Students use enquiry and self- reflection skills regularly. Students are assessed based on their completion of projects as well as their participation in class discussion and group work. Homework is only assigned when a project is being completed and the student must do research at home.

15.0: Review and Evaluation

The SPHE programme is reviewed and evaluated on a continuous basis by the SPHE team at subject meetings throughout the year. The opinion and voice of the students will be considered during reviews and evaluations.



16.0: Developmental Priorities

1. The development of a shared resources folder for SPHE. Ultimately, with this folder to be shared electronically amongst teachers once IT provision in school is updated.