



Presentation Secondary School

Church Street, Castleisland, Co. Kerry



SPHE Policy

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 18th December 2023



Our vision is to prepare accomplished, confident, independent and resilient young adults, who follow their passions, develop a love of learning and become positive role models in society.

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Introduction

Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland, (the 'School') is a Catholic all girls voluntary secondary school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education An Irish Schools' Trust). The School draws on the richness of the religious and cultural heritage of the past, interpreted and lived out for students living in today's world. The School ethos is based on Nano Nagle's vision of bringing God's love to all people and is dedicated to an all-round Christian education based on gospel values.

This SPHE policy is developed within the context of the Vision Statement set out by the School:

Our vision is to prepare accomplished, confident and independent young adults to pursue their aspirations and develop a passion for equality, justice and life-long learning so that they will make a positive contribution to the society in which they live.

Guided by our Catholic ethos, our School provides a positive, respectful, inclusive, and welcoming learning environment for all, with a commitment to academic excellence. Our students are afforded many opportunities to reach their full potential in all aspects of education. We are dedicated and inspiring leaders of innovative and modern teaching practices, supported by a highly equipped technological learning environment.

In this policy document, all references to gender are taken to be inclusive and the term "parent" is taken to include "guardian".

SPHE Policy Context

Education Act 1998

The School recognises that the home is the natural environment where children grow, develop and mature into adults. Notwithstanding this, the School is cognisant of its obligations under Section 9 of the Education Act (1998), which provides:

'A recognised school shall promote the moral, spiritual, social 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'

School management and teachers have a duty to provide the best quality and most appropriate social, personal and health education for their pupils. They also have a duty to protect pupils in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources, interventions or programmes.

Circulars and Guidance

This Policy has been developed and implemented taking into account the requirements and guidance set out in relevant DES Circulars, including M11/03 *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in all schools*, 0037/2010 *Relationships and Sexuality Education*, 0023/2010 *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE): Best Practice Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools* and 0028/2023 *Arrangements for the implementation of the Framework for Junior Cycle with particular reference to the school year 2023/2024*

Links to other school policies and documents

The school adopts and adheres to the DES Child Protection Procedures, Children First Legislation (2017) and has a Child Protection Policy / Child Safeguarding Statement, with the Principal as the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and the Deputy Principal as the Deputy DLP. This Policy is cognisant of all aspects of our current Child Protection Policy and Child Safeguarding Statement.

This Policy is also informed by:

- The Mission Statement of Presentation Secondary School and the CEIST charter
- RSE Policy
- Wellbeing policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Substance Misuse Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- SEN policy

Wellbeing

Student wellbeing is present when students realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community¹. The goal of wellbeing in education is human flourishing for all. When children and young people are 'flourishing' they are not only curious and eager to learn, they are creative and imaginative, connected and empathetic, good team players, confident about who they are, resilient and persistent, positive about themselves and see themselves growing into better people². The subject area of SPHE plays an integral role in the promotion of student wellbeing.

¹ NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines 2017, pg. 17

² NCCA Wellbeing Guidelines 2017, Growing Great Kids pg. 11

In addition, our School acknowledges wellbeing is a multi-faceted concept and efforts to promote student wellbeing require a whole-school approach. Our School recognises that everyone within our school community, regardless of the level and frequency of contact they have with young people, shares the responsibility for creating a positive ethos and climate of respect and care - one in which everyone can make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of each individual within the school and to the wider community. The importance of small, everyday acts of kindness, interest, consideration and positivity cannot be underestimated. These dimensions of relationships and interactions communicate to students that they are recognised, cared for, valued and listened to and thereby, contribute significantly to students' feeling of wellbeing.

SPHE Definition & Aims

SPHE is a programme that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing, personal lives, and spiritual and social development. SPHE also provides the context within which students can learn about the important moral, physical, social and emotional issues around relationships. Students are enabled to participate as active and responsible adults in the personal and social dimensions of society and to make responsible decisions that respect their own dignity and the dignity of others.

The aims of the SPHE programme are:

- To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in community
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making
- To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion
- To promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

School Ethos and SPHE

As a CEIST school, Presentation Castleisland values teaching as one of the most important of all human activities. Our School seeks to build a quality learning community that welcomes, and bears witness to the Gospel values of Jesus Christ, expressed through the lens of the CEIST Charter. These are encapsulated in the core values which are intended to support and nourish the lives of the people who are at the heart of our schools:

- Promoting Spiritual and Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Creating Community
- Being Just and Responsible

Presentation Castleisland provides a rich, holistic education in the Catholic tradition where engagement with and development of the whole person (the intellectual moral, religious, physical, spiritual and psychological) are at the core of our practice. The aims of the SPHE programme support our commitment to nurture the Christian values of respect, justice and integrity in all aspects of school life and to fostering the holistic development of students in our care.

Class Organisation and Timetabling

In accordance with **Circular M11/03**, all second level schools must timetable SPHE as part of the Junior Cycle core curriculum.

In accordance with **Circular 0037/2010**, all second level schools must implement Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) as an element of SPHE at Junior Cycle and as an RSE programme in Senior Cycle, even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class.

In Presentation Castleisland, SPHE is timetabled for a minimum of one class period a week for first, second and third year students (Junior Cycle). Every effort is made to ensure that teachers retain their class group from first year through to third year.

As a post-primary school we have obligations regarding SPHE under Department of Education **Circular 0028/2023**, which states: *'The SPHE short course is 100 hours spread across first, second and third year (and must be provided in each of the three years)'*. Students must follow the newly developed NCCA short course specification.

The subject is also timetabled at Senior Cycle with TY & 5th year students availing of a comprehensive, age appropriate programme.

Content of SPHE programme

a) Junior Cycle

New Syllabus - Current 1st & 2nd Years (2023 - 2024)

- **Strand 1: Understanding myself and others**

This strand focuses on developing self-awareness and self-esteem and building some of the foundational skills and dispositions needed for healthy relationships and to thrive in life, including communicating and negotiating, listening, showing empathy, respecting difference, and self-management/self-regulation.

- **Strand 2: Making healthy choices**

This strand offers opportunities for students to consider how they can make healthy choices to support their wellbeing. It explores what being healthy might look like for a teenager, what helps or gets in the way of making healthy choices and how to access

reliable information to support good choices. Students will also practice the skills needed for making healthy decisions and come to understand contextual factors, such as family, peer, media and social pressures, that influence decisions.

- **Strand 3: Relationships and sexuality**

This strand explores the cognitive, physical, emotional and social aspects of relationships and sexuality through a positive, inclusive, rights and responsibilities-based approach. The focus is on family relationships, friendships, romantic and potential sexual relationships in the future.

- **Strand 4: Emotional wellbeing**

This strand primarily focuses on nurturing emotional wellbeing and promoting positive mental health. It helps students develop problem solving and coping skills for dealing with the emotional ups and downs of life, explores how they can support themselves and others in challenging times and discusses where/how to find support, if needed. The four strands are underpinned by three cross-cutting elements that are foundational for effective teaching and learning in SPHE. These are:

- Awareness
- Dialogue
- Reflection and action.

Old Syllabus - Current 3rd Years (2023 - 2024)

The curriculum for SPHE is presented in 10 modules, each of which appears in each year of the three year Junior Cycle. The emphasis is on developing skills, understanding, attitudes and values important in all of these areas.

The ten modules are:

- Belonging and integrating
- Self-Management
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendship
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

Further detail on each of the 10 modules is included in Appendix A.

b) Senior Cycle

Senior Cycle SPHE aims to support learners in making informed choices for health and wellbeing now and in the future. The framework builds on students' prior learning in primary and Junior Cycle SPHE.

The framework is built around five areas of learning³:

- Mental health
- Gender studies
- Substance use
- Relationships and sexuality education
- Physical activity and nutrition

c) Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationships and Sexuality Education forms an important part of the SPHE programme. While all elements of this policy apply to RSE, a separate policy statement is available with specific reference to the School's delivery of RSE.

Delivery and Teaching

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

As the SPHE programme is primarily skills-based, teaching methods are experiential in nature with the emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods are student centred and are appropriate to the age and development of the student. The 'ASK Model' (Attitude, Skills and Knowledge) is widely used in the delivery of classes. The class atmosphere is one of respect for the privacy of each individual student and is hallmarked by sensitivity and care. A respectful code of conduct is expected from all participants.

Teaching methodologies include:

- Groupwork
- Role play
- Brainstorming
- Icebreakers
- Narrative expression
- Debating
- Project work
- Artwork
- Multi-media materials
- Case studies

³ Curriculum Framework, NCCA

- Visiting speakers
- Online collaboration and contribution
- Reflection journals

Staff Development and Subject Development

The value placed on SPHE by the School is evident by the commitment on the part of management to developing a core of trained SPHE teachers and to appointing an SPHE coordinator. The Board of Management provides the necessary human and material resources to support the programme on an ongoing basis. In-career development is an integral part of this programme.

School management encourages and facilitates teachers to attend relevant in-service training for the continued development of SPHE.

Cross Curricular Links

Presentation Castleisland recognises the importance of linking with other subject departments in planning and delivering the SPHE programme. The following subject areas form cross curricular links with the SPHE Programme, with specific examples of linked content:

Subject	Example of linked content
Home Economics	Healthy eating, first aid, good hygiene
P.E.	Physical fitness and activity
Science	Biological anatomy
Religious Education	Spiritual and moral development
Civic, Social and Political Education	Preparation for participatory citizenship
Wellbeing	Cultivating emotional, physical and social wellbeing
Guidance	Study skills, motivation, goal setting

Extra-curricular activities are regularly organised by the School that contribute to the positive health and overall social and personal development of students.

Participation

The Education Act (1998) provides that a student is not required to attend instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent or, in the case of a student who has reached the age of eighteen years, the student. Parents have a right therefore to withdraw a student from all or any aspect of SPHE, including RSE. Parents must notify the Principal in advance of their wish to have their child withdrawn from all or part of the programme. The School requires that this request be put in writing. It will be necessary for parents to make suitable arrangements for the welfare of their child during these

timetabled times. Where students are withdrawn from SPHE, the School cannot take responsibility for any versions of class content passed on to them by other students.

School management will notify parents by letter, text, app notification or otherwise prior to the delivery of the RSE module of SPHE during the school term. A draft of the notification is included in Appendix B.

Sensitive Issues

SPHE teachers strive to address the needs of students in a caring and supportive manner. Class discussion in SPHE is of a general nature, and is not personally directed, in accordance with the agreed class ground rules. Inappropriate questions will not be answered by the class teacher, or from student to student. Only questions directly pertinent to the lesson content will be addressed in class. The SPHE teacher may also exercise his or her own professional judgement in checking whether to answer the question privately after the class has finished. Should a teacher be concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she will seek advice from the Guidance Counsellor or the Principal [without identifying the student].

Referral

Where appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links and personnel, either within or external to the School community. Where a teacher is in doubt as to a course of action, the teacher will discuss the issue with the Principal.

All staff in the School will follow the recommendations for reporting concerns or disclosures as outlined in *Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* and the Department of Education and Skills document, *Child Protection: Guidelines and Procedures*.

Confidentiality

Teachers strive to create a safe learning environment for all students. While students are not encouraged to disclose personal or private information in SPHE classes, there may be times when they talk about their own lives. Confidentiality is respected and upheld by the teacher unless the teacher feels that the child is at risk or where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a law may be broken. In such a case, the appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures for Post-Primary Schools, the School's Child Protection Policy / Child Safeguarding Statement and the Children First legislation (2017) or the School's Substance Abuse Policy, i.e. the teacher must inform the Designated Liaison Person and ensure that that all reporting procedures are complied with.

Guidelines for the Use of External Agencies

National and international research has consistently shown that the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that he/she can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing and health education.

If an external facilitator is invited to the School to supplement and complement the delivery of the SPHE programme, the School follows the guidance of Circular **0043/2018**.

This includes:

- The Principal and Board of Management are informed
- The SPHE teacher discusses and agrees the content of the presentation with the facilitator
- The SPHE teacher completes preparatory and follow up work where required
- The degree of explicitness of the content of the class is discussed and agreed before the visit
- The facilitator is accompanied by the class teacher throughout the visit
- The facilitator is advised to report to the School office upon arrival

All external facilitators to the School will deal with discussions in line with the aims of the SPHE programme and the ethos of the School.

Assessment, Record Keeping and Reporting

The School accepts that it is in the interests of all parents that children grow up in a healthy and mature fashion. The School will strive to keep parents informed of the contents of the SPHE programme and available resources.

SPHE teachers report progress and achievements in SPHE for every student on the Christmas and Summer reports. In addition, feedback on student progress is given to parents at Parent Teacher meetings.

Whole School Support for SPHE

This policy will be available for all School staff personnel.

While specific teachers are trained and charged with the responsibility of delivering the programme, every teacher is a teacher of SPHE in that he/she may from time to time see opportunities to promote positive health and wellbeing among students, and encourage responsible and mature decision making. There is a strong focus on pastoral care in the School with regular pastoral care meetings taking place among management. The Year Heads play an active role in providing direct pastoral care and support to students.

Review and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed and evaluated regularly under the direction of the Board of Management. The SPHE course is never static. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents, students, teachers and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of School self-evaluation and policy planning.

Ratification

This policy was ratified and adopted by the Board of Management on:

Signed: Mary O'Rourke
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 18/12/23

Signed: Pierce Dagon
Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 18/12/23

Appendix A: Overview of Junior Cycle Modular Course

Module	First Year	Second Year	Third Year
Belonging and integrating	Coping with change Joining a new group Appreciating difference Bullying is everyone's business Coping with loss	Looking back, Looking Forward Group work Family ties	Goal setting for third year Work contract
Self-Management: A sense of purpose	Organising myself Organising my work at home and in school Balance in my life	What motivates me Study Skills	Organising my time Planning for effective study Coping with examinations
Communication skills	Express yourself Learning to listen Passive, assertive and aggressive communication	Assertive communication	Learning to communicate Communication in situations of conflict
Physical health	Body care Healthy eating Exercise	Body Care and Body Image	Physical exercise Relaxation Diet
Friendship	Making new friends A good friend	The changing nature of friendship	Boyfriends and girlfriends
Relationships and sexuality	Me as unique and different Friendship Changes at adolescence The reproductive system Images of male and female Respecting myself and others	From conception to birth Recognising and expressing feelings and emotions Peer pressure and other influences Managing relationships Making responsible decisions Health and personal safety	Body image Where am I now? Relationships - what's important The three R's: respect, rights, and responsibilities Conflict
Emotional health	Recognising Feelings Respecting my Feelings and the Feelings of Others	Self Confidence Body Image	Stress Feelings and moods
Influences and decisions	My Heroes	Positive and Negative Influences Making Decisions	Making a good decision
Substance use	Why use drugs? Alcohol: the facts Smoking and its effects. Smoking: Why? Why not?	The effects of drugs Alcohol and its effects Alcohol? Why?, Why not? Cannabis and its effects. Cannabis: Why?, Why not?	Ecstasy: the realities Heroin: the realities
Personal safety	Looking after myself	Accidents at home and in school Feeling threatened	Recognising unsafe situations Violence Help agencies

Appendix B

Sample wording for notification to parents on RSE

Dear parent/guardian,

As part of the Social, Personal & Health education (S.P.H.E.) syllabus, we are required to cover the area of Relationships and Sexuality (R.S.E.).

The teaching of this topic will commence shortly.

R.S.E. plays a critical role in supporting and preparing young people for the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Should you have any queries or concerns, we will be happy to address these.

Regards,

School Principal