

**ST. NATHY'S COLLEGE**  
BALLAGHADERREEN

*SOCIAL, PERSONAL & HEALTH EDUCATION*  
*(S.P.H.E.)*

POLICY STATEMENT

**May 2006.**

## **SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. 1 Our School Philosophy**

St. Nathy's College, as a Catholic Voluntary Secondary School, is a witnessing community which fosters:

The full potential of all staff and students  
A positive partnership between all members of the school and wider community  
The highest standards of teaching, learning and performance.

Our commitment to S.P.H.E. is a feature of our general commitment to "provide for the faith and personal development of each student" (cf. School Mission Statement).

### **1. 2 Definition of Social, Personal and Health Education**

We take as our working definition of S.P.H.E. as

*'the integration of the academic, social, emotional and religious education of our students so that an atmosphere of care obtains in the school community'.*  
(Fehenev 1994, 2 )

The general aim of education is to contribute to the development of all aspects of the individual for personal and family life, for living in the community and for leisure. Commitment to education in the area of personal and social development arises out of this holistic aim of education and encompasses all the dimensions of life, including the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, social and environmental, and the complex interplay between these dimensions, which contributes to personal well being and to positive inter-personal relationships.

The social, personal and health education offered to our young people is as important (if not more so) than any other area of the curriculum. A young person who has a high degree of self-worth, a sense of security and a positive self-image will be more disposed to school life, will be more aware of the relationship between life-style, environment and health and conscious of the challenge to support personal, family and policy choices that promote health in all its dimensions.

Social, personal and health education (SPHE) provides students with a unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. Students can be 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.

### **1.3 School Ethos and S.P.H.E.**

The S.P.H.E. policy is written with regard to the ethos enshrined in our Mission Statement of the School and in the Catholic Educational Philosophy which is founded on the Christian values of justice, truth and honesty, which permeate all aspects of school life. The thrust of this policy is care. From our perspective, as a Catholic school which sees itself as a community, our commitment to care is not 'humanistic' but rather based on the invitation of Christ - 'thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. These values will be enhanced by the S.P.H.E. programme.

Finally, the definition assumes a process. It speaks of the integration of the various aspects of our education system. In developing this policy we are aware that we are undertaking a journey of exploration and development. It is a journey during which we must challenge, renew and perhaps develop values. It is a journey during which we will gradually transform our school structures so that an atmosphere of care truly obtains throughout the school community.

### **1.4 Aims of S.P.H.E.**

The aims of the S.P.H.E. programme are

- To enable to students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in community
- 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.

The school acknowledges that the primary responsibility for the personal development of children rests with their parents. However, it also accepts, as outlined in the 1998 Education Act, its role in supporting parents in this work.

### **1.5 A whole school approach**

#### **1.5.1 Our approach**

We believe the ways in which every member of staff relates 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. Consequently, every teacher, every class and extracurricular activity offers opportunities for enhancing the personal and social development of the students. St. Nathy's College aims to create an environment which fully supports SPHE.

The introduction of S.P.H.E. gives the school an opportunity to develop positively and strive to achieve an environment in which

- 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 is valued
- Conflict is handled constructively
- Initiative and creativity are encouraged
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted.

### **1.5.2. SPHE Structures**

The whole school approach to S.P.H.E. is reflected in the range of structures and processes that exist in the school to support the aims outlined above. The following structures have an important role to play in creating an atmosphere in the school community to sustain an effective S.P.H.E. programme.

#### Process Structures:

S.P.H.E. co-coordinator

S.P.H.E. policy committee (includes all involved in the subject area)

#### Care Structures:

Guidance and Counseling service

Pastoral Care team

School Chaplain

Class Tutor system

Year Head System

Mentoring Programme

#### Policies:

Behaviour Code.

Anti- Bullying Policy and procedures.

Policy for the reporting of abuse.

Pastoral Care Policy

#### Communications structures:

Structures to inform subject teachers and students about events and developments.

Structures for communication between Tutors, Year Heads and S.P.H.E. team and Pastoral Care team.

Structures for parental involvement:

Home School Liaison Committee

The Parents' Association

Parenting programmes (in association to Adult Education & external agencies).

Parent teacher meetings

Student structures:

Mentor System

Mentor and Leadership training courses

Student Representative Association

### **1.5.3 SPHE Programmes**

There are two main structured programmes in SPHE in the school:

(a) a classroom programme and (b) the Health Promoting School Initiative.

## **SECTION 2. THE CLASSROOM CURRICULUM S.P.H.E.**

### **2.1 Structure of the Programme**

The allocation of modules and themes in S.P.H.E. has been developed in response to the views of teachers and needs of students and mindful of the recommendations of the DES

#### **CONTENT:**

The class programme in each year will be divided into four areas:

1. DRUGS AWARENESS (based on the 'On My Own Two Feet' programme)
2. LIFESKILLS (emotional, personal and interpersonal skills)
3. R.S.E. (based on the DES RSE programme)
4. HEALTH (physical)

A tabulation of the content of the classroom programmes can be found in Appendix. C

### **2.2 Cross Curricular Links:**

The SPHE team is conscious of the potential for cross-curricular links in particular with CSPE, RE, Science and Home Economics. The team will endeavour to develop and formalise these links as part of the development of the SPHE programme in the school.

## **2.3 RSE**

As can be seen from the above outline of S.P.H.E., a component on R.S.E. is integral to the vision.

- (a) The care and support structures in the school will support students in their growth as people and, more specifically, will model good relationship practice based on a healthy respect for all individuals.
- (b) The curricular dimension will be delivered as a section of the S.P.H.E. programme (8 specific classes of a 32 class total per year).

### **2.3.1 Social Context of RSE**

Relationships and Sexuality are key elements of healthy social and personal development in all our lives, but particularly in the life of an adolescent. Adolescence is marked by the onset of physical sexual maturity. This stage of development is also marked by the establishment of first significant boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, by the first experience of sexual attraction and by the experience of falling in, and out, of love. There is greater freedom and responsibility and exposure to a bewildering variety of messages about sexuality, issues of sexual orientation and the place of sexuality in personal and social life. Many parents and educators are concerned that the adolescent needs a thorough preparation for properly ordering sexuality and relationships in this cultural milieu. Such sexual development calls for the critical evaluation of the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values with which adolescents are bombarded within the parameters of a set of moral values.

### **2.3.2 Aims and Objectives in RSE**

#### **Aims**

- to help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships
- to promote an understanding of sexuality
- to promote a positive attitude to one's sexuality and in one's relationship with others
- to promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction as participation in the divine gift of life
- to enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a Catholic moral and spiritual framework.

#### **Objectives**

RSE should enable the students to:

- acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships
- develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem
- become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change especially during adolescence and to develop respect for difference between individuals

understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections

understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex role stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality

value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood

develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others

develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety.

### **2.3.3. RSE and the ethos of the school**

According to the Second Vatican Council, *'As they [children and young people] advance in years, they should be given positive and prudent sexual education.'* Education in sexuality includes all dimensions of the topic: moral, spiritual, psychological, emotional and physical.

The presentation of material in this section of the course takes place with due regard to the Catholic ethos of the school. These materials are presented in the light of the following value statements.

Each individual is unique in the eyes of God and valuable in his/her own right.

Ours is a communal and interdependent nature – our longing for intimacy with each other is an expression of ultimate desire for unity with God.

Our destiny is as a loving community united to God – this is the ground of our relationships.

We are all sexual beings from the womb to the tomb and our bodies have a sacramental quality and goodness as they too are destined for immortal glory.

Therefore our sexuality, like our lives, is a gift from God.

making decisions about sexual behaviour is not simply a private and personal matter - there are also social and moral implications.

the commitment of marriage has a sacramental status, recognising it as the most fully human expression of human intimacy.

As such, marriage is the proper context for sexual intercourse.

sexual intercourse is an expression of intimacy and relationship - it is not appropriate to casual encounters.

any sexual contact by force or due to pressure is a violation of the person.

men and women have equal rights and responsibilities in sexual matters.

## **SECTION 3. THE DELIVERY OF THE S.P.H.E. CLASS PROGRAMME**

### **3.1 Methodology:**

A variety of experiential teaching methods will be used to teach the S.P.H.E. programme.

These methods are child-centred and appropriate to the age and stage of development of the student and reflect the aims and ethos of the school.

The class atmosphere must be one of respect for the privacy of each individual student and marked by sensitivity and care.

Community resources may be used to enhance the programme in line with agreed school policy.

### **3.2 Sensitive issues/participation/ confidentiality/referral.**

While the S.P.H.E. programme is a compulsory subject on the Junior Certificate curriculum, parents have the right to withdraw their child from the Relationships and Sexuality Education module. A standard letter is sent to parents outlining the content of the course for that year group. Parents are asked to respond if they wish to withdraw their child. (c.f. Appendix B). It will be necessary for parents of any students opting out of the Relationships and Sexuality Education module to make suitable arrangement with School management for the supervision of their child at these times.

The teacher, with reference to the agreed procedures for S.P.H.E. (see below), will answer questions of a sensitive nature pertinent to the lesson content.

Only material which has been outlined in the RSE course content for that year will be addressed in class. This is to ensure that parents can be informed of the content in advance. The choice of topics for each year has been carefully considered and consulted upon to ensure age appropriateness and a due regard to the ethos of the school.

Class teachers will not give advice on personal matters to individual students, but they will refer students to the Guidance Counsellor or to outside agencies in consultation with parents.

If a teacher comes into possession of sensitive information e.g. previously unreported sexual abuse, drug related behaviour, serious crime, suicidal behaviour, they will handle the information sensitively and they will follow D.E.S guidelines in informing the relevant authorities.

The S.P.H.E. team will develop a set of procedures and guidelines for the managements of classes and resources within the department.

### **3.3 The Role of Visitors**

All S.P.H.E. guest speakers will be made aware of and requested to comply with the school's S.P.H.E. policy.

The presentations of guest speakers will be negotiated with the relevant S.P.H.E. teachers before delivery to students.

All presentations must have appropriate content and also be appropriate to the age of the students.

Guest speaker's work is supplementary to the existing core delivery of teacher's work.

The S.P.H.E. teacher will remain in the classroom for the presentation.

## **SECTION 4. RESOURCES.**

### **4.1. Timetable / teacher allocation**

On the timetable one class a week for each class group will, ideally, be allotted to S.P.H.E. in Junior Cycle. At Senior Cycle, S.P.H.E. will be taught as part of the R.E. programme.

### **4.2 Co-coordinator and committee**

An S.P.H.E. co-coordinator has been appointed and given the role of co-coordinating programme development in this area.

An S.P.H.E. committee consisting of teachers of this topic and parent representatives has been established to develop and review policy in the area.

### **4.3 Curriculum Planning & Development / In-service**

The school recognises that all school staff need development and information regarding the S.P.H.E. programme.

Teachers directly involved in the S.P.H.E. programme in the school require particular support. They will have an understanding of and a familiarity with the methodologies associated with education in this area. Teachers will receive training in the methods for the respective programmes. This will be done on an ongoing basis, involving a wider pool of teachers in the provision of S.P.H.E. in the school.

All teachers assigned to S.P.H.E. will have access to in-service for the programme.

Provision will also be made for the S.P.H.E. teachers directly involved to meet during the school year during staff days.

### **4.4 Resources**

Monies will be made available for the purchase of materials for the development of Class Programmes in S.P.H.E. Materials for S.P.H.E. will be stored in the S.P.H.E. Co-coordinator's classroom as well as in the Chaplain's office for easy access by all teachers. A catalogue of classroom resources will be maintained by the S.P.H.E. coordinator. A stock take of materials will be conducted by the co-coordinator each year to ensure accountability. A library of reference material for

teachers will be developed by the co-coordinator in conjunction with the school librarian.

## **SECTION 5. COMMUNICATION OF THE POLICY TO THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

### **Parents**

Parent representatives have been involved in the development of the S.P.H.E. policy, have attended the meetings and have contributed to the formation of the policy. A report will be made by these representatives to the Parents' Council. All parents of new students will be given a copy of the policy on request.

### **Staff**

Staff are kept abreast of the aims and *raison d'être* of S.P.H.E. The school is mindful of the need to develop an awareness of the SPHE programme among the whole staff and will avail of opportunities at staff meetings to appraise staff of developments in the area. In this context the importance of the Health Promotion initiative cannot be underestimated as a vehicle for involving a broad range of staff in promoting an SPHE agenda.

## **SECTION 6. REVIEW, ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

### **6.1 Student programme assessment**

S.P.H.E. will not be formally examined at Certificate Examinations.

Self-assessment by students, using self-assessment tools such as questionnaires and/or worksheets, will be seen as an integral part of the teaching, learning and assessment process. Self-assessment tools must be based on clearly stated criteria. Some outcomes of self-assessment must be private.

Peer assessment might also be used to evaluate how well a group might work as a team.

## **SECTION 7 SPHE PLAN 2006 – 2007**

It is the responsibility of the SPHE core team to co-ordinate the SPHE plan for the school. The team will meet at the start of each year to identify the priorities for development for that year.

It has been agreed that we will re-assess and develop, as appropriate, the above structures over the period of the next five years, on the basis of agreed yearly goals and targets to be established by the SPHE department.

Identification of yearly goals will be based on feedback from the staff, parents and students who will be asked to identify their perceived needs and to comment on the effectiveness of programmes and structures relating to SPHE provision in the school.

## APPENDIX A - SPHE PLAN

### Stage 1. Review / stocktake of current provision

A review of the current provision in relation to SPHE has been conducted during 2005/ 6 which will form the basis for the development of the subject in the coming years.

### INVENTORY OF STRUCTURES IN THE SCHOOL IN RELATION TO S.P.H.E.

<b>PROCESS STRUCTURES</b>		Status as of May 2006	Issues identified for further action in plan for 2006 / 07
S.P.H.E. co-ordinator	Yes	Appointed 2002	
S.P.H.E. policy committee	Yes	Appointed 2005. 2 teachers, 2 parents, 2 students, Principal	
S.P.H.E. Teacher Meetings	Yes	Occur at staff planning days.	
<b>Care Structures:</b>			
Guidance and counselling service	Yes	Guidance Counsellor and a referral system to outside agencies	
Chaplain	Yes	Part time Chaplain	
Pastoral Care team	Yes	Providing pastoral support on referral	
Class Tutor System	Yes	The role in relation to S.P.H.E. is not clarified fully	Role requires further clarification & development.
Year Head System	Yes	Clear Pastoral role	
<b>Policy procedures:</b>			
Discipline procedures	Yes	Ratified by the Board	
Homework and study policy.	No		This policy in development & due for completion in 2007 / 8
Bullying policy procedures	Yes	Policy ratified by B.O.M.	
Policy for the reporting of abuse	Yes	Procedures from the DES and Health Service Executive have been adopted	
Extra – Curricular Activity policy	No	There is significant provision, but no written policy.	Survey to be conducted followed by development of policy

<b>Communication structures:</b>			
Structures to inform subject teachers and students about events	Yes	Notice boards in the staffroom and corridors dedicated to this area	
Structures for communication between Tutors, Year Heads and subject teachers regarding students	Yes	This aspect of school life needs attention. Teachers report feeling that they do not know information that they need to know.	
<b>Structures for parental involvement:</b>			
Home School Liaison.	Yes	There is a H.S.C.L teacher and a strong local committee	
Parents Association	Yes		
Parenting Programmes	Yes	There are parenting programmes run each year in association with Adult Education and outside agencies	
Newsletters	Yes	2 Newsletters per year communicate events and information.	
<b>Student structures.</b>			
Mentoring Programmes	Yes		
Students Representative Association	Yes		
Student training in Leadership	Yes	Aimed at Student Mentors	To be adopted and geared towards all students
Extra-Curricular Activities	Yes	There is a large range of activities available in the school.	
<b>Programme Provision</b>			
Junior Cycle Programme	Yes	1 class period per week to all classes in First & Second Year	Agreement needs to be reached in relation to Third Year Groups.
Senior Cycle Programme	Yes	RSE aspect of the course is taught during R.E.	
RSE	Yes	Taught to all students in the school	
Learning Support	Yes	Provided to all who qualify	

## **APPENDIX B - RSE information and permission letter to parents.**

Dear Parent / Guardian,

Young people today are presented with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. This school aims to address these challenges by providing Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). Through the SPHE class students learn to develop important skills for living a healthy life. Your child will have the opportunity to address the following in SPHE:

- Belonging and Integrating
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendships, Relationships and Sexuality (RSE)
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

We recognise that parents have the primary responsibility for the personal development of their children, and it is our wish to compliment that role. With the school and the family working together, the programme can have greater success. You can support the SPHE programme at home by encouraging and praising the efforts of your teenager, by communicating with them about their own growth, development, friendships, decisions and health.

The RSE component of the programme will be conducted in St. Nathy's in harmony with the Catholic ethos of the school. While we assume that all students will want to participate in the classes, if you have any concern about your son/daughter attending these RSE classes, please contact the school to discuss the issue. Classes will be conducted between (\*\*\*\*\*dates). Please feel free to contact the school before that date.

Yours sincerely,

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Fr. Martin Convey  
PRESIDENT