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## Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy

### Introductory Statement and Rationale

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#### (a) Introductory Statement

The staff of Saint Michael's National School formulated this school plan for Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE), in consultation with our Board of Management and our Parents, as we believe that SPHE is a shared responsibility and their contributions and involvement will be essential to the effective implementation of the SPHE programme in the school.

#### (b) Rationale

Aspects of SPHE have been taught in Saint Michael's National School for many years through various programmes and initiatives such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall and Relationships and Sexuality Education. It has also been taught through integration with other subject areas such as Physical Education, Religion, Geography, etc. With the introduction of updated Stay Safe and Walk Tall programmes we decided to review our whole school plan for SPHE.

### Vision and Aims

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#### (a) Vision:

We acknowledge the importance of SPHE in the life of the school and in light of keeping our children safe and happy, and helping them to achieve their full potential while becoming full and active citizens. S.P.H.E. in Saint Michael's National School will foster self-worth and self-confidence and will place a particular emphasis on developing a sense of personal responsibility for one's own behaviour and actions. It will provide particular opportunities to foster the personal development, health and well-being of the child and to help him create and maintain supportive relationships and become an active and responsible citizen in society.

#### (b) Aims:

The children of Saint Michael's National School should be enabled to achieve the aims outlined in the SPHE curriculum, which include:

- to promote the personal development and well-being of the child.

- to foster in the child a sense of care and respect for himself/herself and others and an appreciation of the dignity of every human being.
- to promote the health of the child and provide a foundation for healthy living in all its aspects.
- to enable the child to make informed decisions and choices about the social, personal and health dimensions of life both now and in the future.
- to develop in the child a sense of social responsibility, a commitment to active and participative citizenship and an appreciation of the democratic way of life.
- to enable the child to respect human and cultural diversity and to appreciate and understand the interdependent nature of the world.

## Curriculum Planning

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### 1. Strands and Strand Units:

The curriculum is delineated at four levels—infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes—and is divided into three strands: Myself, Myself and others, and Myself and the wider world.

Each of these strands is further subdivided into a number of strand units or topic areas that contain particular objectives.

We will teach aspects of all three major strand units each year and strand units will be chosen in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in SPHE over a two year period. The Safety and Protection strand unit will be taught each year using the Stay Safe programme. This should ensure a broad and balanced programme for the pupils. However, this does not preclude a teacher from selecting a strand already taught the previous year should the need arise.

Strand	Strand Unit (Year 1)	Strand Unit (Year 2)
Myself	Self- Identity	Taking Care of My Body
	Making Decision (3 <sup>rd</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> )	Growing and Changing <i>(Relationships &amp; Sexuality Education Programme)</i>
	Safety and Protection <i>(Stay Safe Programme)</i>	
Myself and Others	Myself and my Family	My Friends and other People
		Relating to Others
Myself and the wider world	Developing citizenship	Media Education

### 2. Contexts for SPHE

SPHE will be taught through a combination of the following contexts:

#### a) Positive School Climate and Atmosphere

Saint Michael's National School has created a positive atmosphere by:

- building effective communication
- catering for individual needs
- creating a health-promoting physical environment
- developing democratic processes
- enhancing self-esteem
- fostering respect for diversity
- fostering inclusive and respectful language
- developing appropriate communication
- developing a school approach to assessment

#### **b) Delivery of SPHE**

SPHE is allocated ½ hour per week as per the SPHE Curriculum guidelines. Teachers may allocate 1 hour per fortnight to allow for more in depth exploration of a strand unit and/or may integrate with other curricular areas as deemed appropriate.

*Discrete SPHE time provides for the teaching of some elements of the programme during designated class periods. This time can be used to develop and practise particular skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. To use this time effectively it may be more appropriate for the teacher to organise it in block periods and use it as required rather than confining the time to a set period in each week.*

#### **c) Integration with other subject areas and Linkage within SPHE**

Teachers may adopt a thematic approach to SPHE by integrating it with other subject areas such as Language, Geography, History, Religion, Visual Arts, Physical Education, etc. Themes/Projects such as Active Schools Flag, Friendship Week, Healthy Heart Week, Green Flag etc. may also be explored.

#### **Approaches and Methodologies**

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The approaches and methodologies used in SPHE are crucial to the effectiveness of the programme. Active learning is the principle learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE, therefore we will endeavour to teach SPHE using a variety of strategies which include:

▪ drama activities	▪ Circle Time
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ co-operative games</li> <li>▪ use of pictures, photographs and visual images</li> <li>▪ written activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ use of media</li> <li>▪ Internet &amp; ICT</li> </ul>
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## Assessment

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Assessment is a central part of the everyday learning and teaching process in SPHE. It can provide valuable information on the child's progress and on the effectiveness and suitability of the programme and the teaching methods being used.

Saint Michael's National School uses the following recommended informal tools for assessment in SPHE:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Pupil's Self Assessment

## Children with Different Needs

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Teachers will endeavour to adapt and modify activities and methodologies in SPHE to encourage participation by children with special needs. The Special Education Teachers will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary. We will liaise with trained professionals/appropriate agencies when dealing with sensitive issues to ensure that the children involved are fully supported.

## Equality of Participation and Access:

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Saint Michael's National School recognises and values diversity, and believes all children are entitled to access the services, facilities, or amenities that are available in the school environment. Ours is a *mixed-sex* school and we endeavour to challenge traditional stereotypes and ensure that equal opportunities are given to boys and girls to participate in discussion, debate, presentation, etc

## Organisation

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### 1. Policies and Programmes that support SPHE:

<i>Policies</i>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Safeguarding</li> <li>• Anti-Bullying / Bí Cineálta</li> <li>• Relationships and Sexuality Education</li> <li>• Substance Use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Behaviour</li> <li>• Admissions</li> <li>• Health and Safety</li> <li>• Healthy Eating</li> <li>• Acceptable Usage Policy</li> </ul>
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<i>Programmes (examples, not exhaustive)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active School flag / week</li> <li>• Food Dudes</li> </ul>

## 2. Suggested Resources:

Books for Teacher	Audio / Visual	Posters	ICT
RSE Manuals	Busy Bodies	Various posters throughout the school	Webwise
Walk Tall Manuals	Food Dudes		Busy Bodies
Stay Safe			
Making the Links			
Friends for Life			
Weaving Wellbeing			

## 3. Guest Speakers:

When a guest speaker addresses the children in SPHE, the class teacher will remain in the classroom (as per Circular 42/2018). The guest speaker will be made aware of this. On occasion guest speakers may be invited into the class. In the past we have had talks from officers from Limerick Fire Station, dentist, the Community Garda , public health nurse, HSE. Children have also gone on field trips within the local community (to the fire station or library) which reinforces work being done in the area of SPHE.

## Individual Teachers' Planning and Reporting

This plan in SPHE and the curriculum documents will inform and guide teachers in their long and short term planning in SPHE. Each teacher will keep a Cúntas Míósúil and this will inform our progress and needs when evaluating and reviewing our progress in SPHE. *All classes cover the Stay Safe and RSE will be taught at the same time in each class.* Saint Michael's National School is a five teacher mainstream school. Classes may be grouped according to the levels depending on their needs and the availability of staff and other logistical considerations.

### **Staff Development**

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Teachers are encouraged to attend SPHE related courses and will share information/skills acquired from these courses with other members of staff during staff meetings.

### **Parental Involvement**

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Parental involvement is considered an integral part of effectively implementing SPHE. This plan and the curriculum documents are available for parents to inform them of the programme for SPHE. Parents are invited to attend relevant talks in the community. In the past parents have been invited to talks on Cyber Bullying and Anti-Bullying Training. Parents are informed before the Stay Safe and RSE Programmes are delivered and activity sheets are sent home for parents to sign.

Parents will be notified in advance of teaching the Stay Safe and RSE programmes and invited to talk to the teachers if they have any concerns. They will be encouraged to view the contents of the programme. This provides the parents with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the content of the sensitive topics of the Stay Safe and RSE programmes (See Appendix A for sample Letter).

### **Community Links**

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We believe that the local community has a very important role to play in supporting the programme in SPHE and we endeavour to liaise with community members such as the Dental Hygienist, Health Nurse, Fireman, Community Garda, Vet, New Parent, etc.

### **Success Criteria**

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Success achieved will depend on the effectiveness of the teacher's planning and preparation in line with the guidelines outlined in the SPHE curriculum and Teacher Guidelines from the DES, the school's SPHE policy and teacher assessment.

### **Implementation**

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This plan has been formulated by the staff of our school. It will be supported, developed and implemented by teaching and non-teaching staff members alike. It will be the role and responsibility of the whole school staff to ensure that this plan is implemented.

## Ratification and Review

This policy was updated by the staff and BOM of Saint Michael's National School in September 2022.


The policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Saint Michael's National School on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022.

This policy will be reviewed as the need arises.

Signed:  
Chairperson



Signed:  
Principal

  
3/10/22

Appendix A

St. Michael's N.S.,  
11 Barrington St.,

Limerick

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

Relationships and Sexuality education is an integral part of the S.P.H.E programme.

The sensitive elements of the Relationships and Sexuality education programme are covered under the Strand Units, 'Growing and Changing' and 'Taking Care of my Body'.

We will be completing these Strand Units with all class levels in the forthcoming weeks. Please find attached the home/school links pages of the Relationships and Sexuality manual which outline the material that will be covered in class and encourage further discussion on the topics at home.

If you have any concerns please make an appointment to see the class teacher.

Yours sincerely

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## Parents' / Guardians' Letter re "Stay Safe" Programme

St. Michael's N.S.,  
11 Barrington St.,  
Limerick.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Our class teachers will be teaching the personal safety education programme called "**Stay Safe**" over the next few weeks. These lessons will be taught at the same time each day in every classroom.

It is part of the **Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum** which all primary schools are *required* to implement.

The aim of the "Stay Safe" programme is to teach children personal safety skills so they can look after themselves in situations which could be upsetting or dangerous.

Co-operation between parents and teachers is essential to the success of this programme. It is important that parents/guardians are aware of the content of the "Stay Safe" lessons and are able to discuss the lessons with their children. Your child may bring home worksheets which will inform you on the topics being covered in class and how you can reinforce the messages at home.

You can familiarise yourself with the content of the "Stay Safe" lessons at [www.staysafe.ie/teachers/resources.htm](http://www.staysafe.ie/teachers/resources.htm) .

You can always talk to your child's class teacher if you want to discuss the programme further.

Kind regards,

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