



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

### (A) Introductory Statement

Presentation College, Carlow is a voluntary second – level, co-educational school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST. The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy has been developed following consultation between staff, parents, students, Principal and the Board of Management. In this policy document the term ‘parent’ is taken to include ‘guardian’.

### (B) Policy Context and Rationale

This policy is informed by:

- The Mission Statement of Presentation College
- The RSE Policy
- The Anti-Bullying Policy
- The Code of Behaviour
- The Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- The Acceptable Use Policy
- The Special Educational Needs Policy
- The Guidance Plan
- The Wellbeing Policy

### (C) Mission Statement

*Presentation College is, by choice, a truly co-educational school. We aim to prepare all of our pupils, boys and girls alike for the challenges, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. All members of the school community – pupils, parents, teachers and other staff – are held in very high regard and their dignity, worth and individuality is respected. We strive to build a sense of community based on Christian values. The school’s Code of Behaviour acknowledges this and aims to promote a culture of respect throughout the school. It recognises that good discipline enables good teaching and allows good learning to take place.*

### (D) Definitions of SPHE and how it Links with the School Ethos

As part of the school’s Wellbeing programme, SPHE is a subject that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and others, and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. SPHE helps students to develop knowledge, understanding, skills and values that help them to be reflective, empathetic and confident in their identities so that they can embrace opportunities and challenges presented by life, thus better equipped to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. Negotiating friendships and relationships is a core aspect of the SPHE programme.

### (E) Aims of SPHE

- (i) To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in communities.
- (ii) To promote students’ self-esteem and self-confidence.
- (iii) To enable students to develop a framework for responsible decision-making.
- (iv) To provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.
- (v) To promote physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.



## **(F) SPHE: Relationship to Characteristic Spirit and Ethos of the School**

SPHE provides young people with skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and about the way live their lives. While the school acknowledges that the home is the natural environment for the social, personal and health development of children, the Education Act of 1998 (Section 9, subsection d) requires all recognised schools to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. This happens in consultation with their parents and in the context of the Catholic ethos of the school. We embed a sense of safety, belonging, self-esteem, wellbeing and respect among members of the school community.

A summary of what the school currently provides for the general wellbeing of students, both formally and informally to support SPHE is included in Appendix I.

SPHE is seen to build on this existing commitment to the care and development of students within the school.

## **(G) Aim and Rationale of Junior Cycle Short Course Specification**

**Aim:** The SPHE specification aims to develop students' positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing. It also aims to build the capacity of young people to develop and maintain healthy relationships.

**Rationale:** Early adolescence is a time of significant change for young people, physically, emotionally and socially. Through the use of experiential methodologies and group work, students have the dedicated space and time in this SPHE course to develop their understanding and skills to learn about themselves, to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing in a rapidly changing world.

In SPHE, students have opportunities to revisit different themes which focus on developing self-awareness and respect for others, and the skills of self-management, communication, coping, decision-making and relating to others. This spiral approach of revisiting key ideas and topics is familiar from existing approaches to SPHE. This new course builds on this approach but also emphasises the importance of student agency and engagement in the learning process as key to learning in the affective domain. The skills involved are vital for self-fulfilment, for living in communities and for full engagement in learning beyond SPHE. Personal reflection, resilience and empathy are also promoted through SPHE.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is important for young people at this stage of their lives. They are exposed to a lot of information about relationships and sex from informal sources, the media and online. SPHE provides the context within which young people can learn about important physical, social, emotional and moral issues around relationships, sexual health, sexuality and gender identity, including where to get reliable information from trusted sources. It is important to build on students' learning in SPHE in primary education also. Learning in SPHE is essentially supported by a positive, empowering whole school environment and relevant school policies/guidelines including RSE, Anti-Bullying and Substance Use policies, and Child Safeguarding procedures. This broader context for learning in SPHE helps to ensure that students learn to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing. These decisions are further supported and encouraged by school, community and national policies and guidelines.

In Junior Cycle, six indicators (Active, Responsible, Connected, Resilient, Respected and Aware) have been identified as central to students' wellbeing. Learning in SPHE provides learning opportunities designed to enhance each of these indicators, thereby contributing significantly to the school's Wellbeing programme in Junior Cycle.



### (H) Outline of the Junior Cycle Course Content in SPHE

The NCCA Short Course Specification for SPHE is the basis of the Junior Cycle SPHE Programme (available [here](#)). In Presentation College the Short Course Specification is followed from September 2021, but not as a Short Course with Classroom-Based Assessment. SPHE is presented in four strands:

<p><b>Strand 1: Who am I?</b> This strand focuses on developing self-awareness and building self-esteem.</p>	<p><b>Strand 2: Minding myself and others.</b> This strand provides opportunities for students to reflect on how they can best take care of themselves and others.</p>
<p><b>Strand 3: Team up.</b> This strand focuses on students learning about important relationships in their lives and building relationship skills.</p>	<p><b>Strand 4: My mental health</b> This strand focuses on building positive mental health, examining young people’s experience of mental ill health and learning how to support themselves and others in challenging times.</p>

Each strand is spiral in nature and is addressed in each of the three years of Junior Cycle. The nature of much of students’ learning in SPHE is concerned with attitudes, values and feelings and is personal to the student. Students are encouraged to keep a personal learning diary for the duration of the short course, where they can reflect privately on their learning in SPHE. With the agreement of the student, some of the entries may be used to support different learning activities, but essentially the personal learning diary is private and for the student only.

The SPHE short course has been designed for approximately 100 hours of student engagement. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is provided through the SPHE programme, as is the Department of Education and Skills’ policy. A Classroom-Based Assessment in SPHE will be completed by students as part of their learning and assessment in SPHE. The Learning Outcomes in the SPHE short course align with Level 3 Indicators of the National Framework of Qualifications.

### (I) Aim and Objectives of Senior Cycle SPHE

**Aim:** Senior cycle SPHE aims to support students in making choices for health and wellbeing.

**Objectives:** The objectives for SPHE in Senior Cycle are to:

- develop self-awareness through opportunities to reflect on thoughts, values, attitudes and feelings,
- enhance students’ knowledge and understanding of essential health concepts and the wider influences on health and wellbeing to enable informed decision making,
- develop students’ self-efficacy; the confidence to think and behave independently especially in the face of social pressure,
- strengthen students’ capacity to empathise with another person’s situation, feelings and motives in order to enhance relationships with other people,
- develop coping strategies for adolescence and adult life in support of greater resilience,
- develop students’ health literacy skills, including the ability to obtain, critically evaluate and act on health information in support of health and wellbeing,
- develop a willingness to participate in the creation and maintenance of healthy communities and environments.

### (J) Outline of the Content in Senior Cycle SPHE

The NCCA Curriculum Framework for Senior Cycle SPHE may be accessed [here](#). 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 learning:

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

The key resources used for Senior Cycle SPHE include:

- It's your Wellbeing Senior Cycle (Mentor) SPHE by Fiona Chambers, Anne Jones, Anita Stackpoole
- SHIFT (Sexual Health Information for Teens)
- SPHE Resources 2020 To support 5th and 6th year students as they return to school; NCCA
- 'The Human Body', BBC TV series available on DVD.
- TRUST programme, [Talking Relationships, Understanding, Sexuality, Training] (Senior Cycle).
- b4udecide.ie
- 'Growing Up Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender in Ireland' programme (SPHE-PDST)
- Lockers – (SPHE-PDST), available here [Belong To Stand Up](#).
- Bodywhys
- Marie Keating Cancer Awareness Pack. Consent resources at [www.pshe-association.org.uk](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk)
- On My Own Two Feet programme resources.
- Relaxation techniques for use with children and young people (DES/NEPS) <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/new-relaxation-techniques>
- Five Ways to Wellbeing [www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)
- [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)
- <https://www.walkinmyshoes.ie>
- <https://schools.au.reachout.com>
- Consent resources:
  - 100Consent campaign page
  - Youth programmes at DRCC
  - Cycling through consent [clip (c) Western University] • Consent is like a Cup of Tea [clip (c) Blue Seat Studios]
  - SpunOut
  - Jigsaw
  - ThinkUKnow (note: this is a UK website with a different legal/services framework)
- 'Let's Talk About Sex', Walker Books. 'Understanding The Facts of Life', Usborne Books.

*This list is not exhaustive*

The Relationships and Sexuality Programme is provided as an aspect of Senior Cycle SPHE, with a minimum of six lessons taught in each of the Senior Cycle years.

## **(K) Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

RSE is an integral part of SPHE. A minimum of six lessons of RSE is taught to each Year Group, following the DES curriculum guidelines for RSE. Please see our [RSE Policy](#) on our school website for further details.

## **(L) Cross-Curricular Links**

Cross-curricular links are made with the following subjects in particular: Religious Education, Physical Education, Home Economics, Geography, Digital Media Literacy, Science and Biology. The Key Skills embedded in subjects for both Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle are also relevant to SPHE – in particular skills of Staying Well, Managing Myself, Communicating, Working with Others, Being Creative, Literacy and Numeracy at Junior Cycle, and Being Personally Effective, Communicating, Working with Others and Critical and Creative Thinking at Senior Cycle. Teachers of SPHE are encouraged to explicitly make relevant links with other subjects and key skills. In addition to cross-curricular links, SPHE aligns with many whole-school activities such as Cycle Against Suicide, Wellbeing Week, Headstrong Mental Health group, Friends for Life Programme, Safer Internet Day, Meitheal programme and Friendship Week.



## **(M) Teaching Methodologies**

As SPHE is primarily skills-based, teaching methods are often of an experiential nature with an emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. Other methodologies often include pair work, group work, brainstorming, quizzes, role play / simulation, walking debates, video clips, case studies, art work and project work, guest speakers. Written assignments and presentations of research.

These teaching methods will be student-centred and appropriate to the age, stage and development of the student. The class atmosphere must be one of respect for the privacy of the individual and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. Students should feel that they are in a safe environment in SPHE, where a code of respectful conduct is expected of all. The teacher establishes ground rules at the start of the year, and may refer to these to help ensure a safe classroom environment.

## **(N) How SPHE is timetabled**

SPHE is timetabled for one hundred hours at Junior Cycle, across three years, as part of the Wellbeing programme. From September 2021, First Year students have two, forty minute SPHE classes per week in First Year, one in Second Year and one class in Third Year. A class of Tutor time is also provided in First Year and Guidance-Related learning is also scheduled for each class. Senior Cycle SPHE is timetabled for one period per week in Transition, Fifth and Sixth Year.

## **(O) Staff Development, Training and Resources**

The value placed on SPHE by the school is evident in the commitment on the part of School Management to develop a core of trained SPHE teachers, including a Coordinator of SPHE in a voluntary and rotating capacity. Continuing professional development is an integral part of this programme and teachers of SPHE, whether new or experienced, are encouraged by Management to avail of up-to-date CPD in this area. PDST-SPHE provide most of the CPD in SPHE, both in-person through the Education Centre Network and through online webinars. Three members of the SPHE Team engaged in PDST CPD in SPHE Planning in November 2021. School Management is responsible for facilitating time to attend CPD in line with teachers' relevant training needs in SPHE where such events are relevant and scheduled during the school day. SPHE teachers are responsible individually to stay informed about CPD events, and should liaise with the SPHE Coordinator in this regard. As part of the core curriculum, SPHE has a budgetary allocation in line with its stage of development and its teaching methodologies and timetabled allocation. The budget may be used to purchase and update resource materials in hard copy and online teaching materials to support SPHE, as well as other materials needed e.g. poster paper, colouring materials etc.

## **(P) Participation / Sensitive Issues / Confidentiality**

### ***Participation:***

SPHE is a core curricular subject on the Junior Cycle curriculum, a cornerstone of the Wellbeing Programme, and it therefore plays a central role in educating students in Wellbeing. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE) is one module of the subject. Each parent has the right to withdraw their child from RSE (see Relationships and Sexuality Policy [here](#)). If a student is withdrawn from the lessons pertaining to the sensitive elements of the RSE programme, parents must give a notice in writing to the Principal that they are withdrawing their child. The student may be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school. However, it will be necessary for parents of any student opting out of RSE to make suitable arrangements with School Management for the welfare of their child at these times. It is important to be aware that in these circumstances the school cannot be responsible for information subsequently passed on by participating students.

### ***Sensitive Issues:***

While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE short-course content, the needs of the students will be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate,



the school will refer students to other supportive links or services, internal or external to the school community e.g. Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, Student Support Team etc. Class discussion will be of a general nature in accordance with the previously agreed ground rules and will not be personally directed. If any questions asked by students are deemed to be inappropriate, the teacher will refer the student to their parents or state that this information may be available at a later stage of the curriculum. Teachers may choose to say that it is not appropriate to deal with that question at this time. If a teacher becomes concerned about a matter that has been raised, he/she should seek advice from the Principal. When deciding whether or not to answer questions the teacher should consider the age and readiness of the students, the SPHE / RSE programme content, the ethos of the school, the RSE policy and use their professional judgment.

### **Confidentiality:**

The normal limits of confidentiality will apply to any information coming to the attention of the teacher. However, every effort should be made to ensure that this information is dealt with in a sensitive and discreet manner. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality and that teachers do not give unconditional guarantees of confidentiality. Confidentiality should be respected unless the teacher is concerned that the child is / was / will be at risk or where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a law may be broken (e.g. substance misuse / underage sex etc.). In such a case, the appropriate action should be taken in accordance with the procedures set down in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and the Children First legislation (2017) or the school's Substance Use Policy, i.e. the teacher must inform the Designated Liaison Person where there is a Child Protection concern, and ensure that that all reporting procedures are complied with. Issues disclosed such as consensual underage sex where both parties are of a very similar age, will be reported to the parent(s).

### **(Q) The Role of Visitors / Guest Speakers**

The SPHE teacher will consult with the Principal in relation to the suitability of guest speakers prior to their invitation to the school. The SPHE Coordinator will oversee communications with guest speakers to ensure maximum benefit to as many classes and students as possible. At all times the Coordinator, Principal and teacher will adhere to the terms of DES [Circular 43/2018](#). All guest speakers will be made aware of and requested to comply with the school SPHE Policy and the content delivered will be evidence-based, aligned with the aims of SPHE, in keeping with the ethos of Presentation College, and enhancing of the SPHE programme and students' wellbeing. The presentations of guest speakers will be negotiated with the relevant SPHE teacher before delivery to the students. The SPHE teacher remains in the classroom while visitors are there. Preparatory and follow-up work, where possible, should be undertaken by the class.

### **(R) How Parents and Students are informed**

As part of the consultation process, the draft SPHE Policy is discussed by the Student Council and feedback provided to the Deputy Principal, who will give fair consideration to student voice. Students are informed of the policy through their SPHE classes and the SPHE and RSE Policies are available on our school website [here](#). The SPHE Short Course Specification (Junior Cycle – available [here](#)) and SPHE Curriculum Framework (Senior Cycle – available [here](#)), are available online should parents or students wish to view the course content. The draft policy is shared with the Parents' Council who are consulted by the Deputy Principal for feedback, which is then considered for the final draft. Parents will be informed of any substantial changes in the programme made by the Department of Education and Skills.

### **(S) How Staff are informed**

Staff are consulted on the draft policy via email and through the opportunity to attend a meeting of the Policy Consultation group where their feedback is considered in the final drafting before ratification of the policy. The policy is available for all staff in the school by its inclusion with the Policy Documents which are kept on VSware,



in hard copy in the Deputy Principal's Office and on our school website. A copy of the policy is included in the SPHE Department folder and is available on our school website: [www.presentationcollegearlow.com](http://www.presentationcollegearlow.com)

## **(T) How the Board of Management is consulted and informed**

The SPHE draft policy is discussed at a meeting of the Board of Management. The Board of Management may make input on the policy and make whatever changes deemed appropriate before ratification of the SPHE policy.

## **(U) Assessment and Reporting**

This short course specification supports a wide variety of approaches to assessment. Some learning outcomes lend themselves to once-off assessment, others to assessment on an ongoing basis as students engage in different learning activities such as discussing, explaining, researching, presenting, planning and taking action. In these contexts, students with their teachers and peers reflect upon and make judgements about their own and others' learning by looking at the quality of particular pieces of work. They plan the next steps in their learning, based on feedback they give and receive. Ongoing assessment can support the student in their learning journey. It is envisaged that students will provide evidence of their learning in a variety of ways including digital media, audio recordings and written pieces but the CBA component will not be done.

In general, homework in SPHE is not advocated, except in the form of an activity or research / project. Students' oral participation, classwork and research / projects may be used by the teacher to assess students and report on their progress. Students will be asked to write their reflections on their learning, which may be checked by the teacher to help assess their understanding and insights into learning experiences. The teacher of SPHE will provide a comment on the Christmas and Summer Reports on VSware for each student, as part of the reporting process on Wellbeing. Parents may meet with the SPHE teachers during Parent-Teacher meetings to discuss their children's progress. Students are encouraged to use their private SPHE journals at home to reflect on their personal learning journeys.

## **(V) Review of SPHE and SPHE Policy**

The SPHE teachers and students will have the opportunity to engage in ongoing review of the policy and subject content both formally and informally. This will be done through students' feedback, in-class discussion, Student Council, Staff email, Staff Policy Consultation groups, Parents' Council and through the School Self-Evaluation surveys used in data gathering.

The SPHE policy will be reviewed in line with the School Plan, in the context of the evolving Wellbeing Programme and as part of the School Self-Evaluation process.

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Signature (Chairperson): \_\_\_\_\_  
*For and on behalf of the Board of Management*

Date of next review: October 2023



## Appendix I

Below is a summary of some of the key provisions of Presentation College for the general wellbeing of students, both formally and informally, to support SPHE:

- Policies which are kept under review, including the following: Acceptable Use, Admissions, Anti-Bullying, Attendance and Participation, CCTV, Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Code of Behaviour, COVID-19 Response Plan, Critical Incident Management Plan, Educational Outings and Tours, Guidance Plan, Relationships and Sexuality, Substance Use.
- Junior Student Support Team and Senior Student Support Team
- Year Heads
- Three Guidance Counsellors
- Friends First Programme
- Links with external agencies e.g. NEPS, CAMHS, CRYS
- Student Council
- Deans of Discipline
- Parents' Council and Student Council
- Student Leadership Teams including:
  - Head Boy / Head Girl
  - Deputy Head Prefects
  - Prefects
  - Meitheal Leaders
- Supervised Study
- Learning Hub / Homework Club
- A range of extra-curricular activities, including sports and games
- Co-curricular activities such as BT Young Scientist
- Information Meetings for Parents
- Outside Speakers
- Study Skills
- Special Education Team
- Student Support (academic and organisational)
- Learning Support
- Induction Day for First Year / Transition Year
- Transition Year
- LCVP
- Open Night for Parents and Students
- Enterprises
- Subject Fieldtrips
- Green Schools
- School Musical
- Christmas Concert
- Global Education Experience / Development Education
- School Masses, including Presentation Day Mass, Graduation Mass, Class Ceremonies etc.
- Active School Week (as part of Wellbeing)
- Positive Mental Health Week (as part of Wellbeing)
- Cycle Against Suicide
- Supporting Charities, including SVP, Shoe-box appeal
- Cross-Curricular links including Religious Education, Home Economics, Science, PE, ICT
- Transition Year Activities
- Parent-Teacher Meetings
- Young Social Innovators

*This list is not exhaustive.*