



**St. Flannan's
College, Ennis,
Co. Clare.**

**Social Personal and Health Education
and
Relationship and Sexuality Education**

1. Mission Statement

St Flannan's College is a school community consisting of students, parents and staff, who are committed to working together to nurture the academic and personal growth of all the students towards mature and responsible adulthood.

The school is a Catholic co-educational voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe.

The aspirations of the school are:

- To enhance the self-esteem of each person in this community;
- To imbue this community with the caring values of the Gospels;
- To champion a socially-inclusive ethos and to cherish all pupils equally;
- To nurture the life skills of students;
- To foster gender equality;
- To promote excellence in academic pursuits;
- To support and encourage the involvement of students in games, athletics and other leisure activities;
- To encourage the development of the individual talents of students.

St Flannan's College aspires to plan for development and change, with due regard to the history and traditions of the College and to its role in the community.

2. Social Personal and Health Education - Definitions and Aims

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a programme which 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.

The aims of the 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 well-being.

These aims are consistent with the Mission Statement of St Flannan's College in that they foster the holistic development of the individual.

3. Outline of the Programme Content

The SPHE programme is currently presented in ten modules each of which is taught in each year of the three years of the Junior Certificate Cycle. The emphasis will be on developing skills, understanding, attitudes and values important to these areas.

The ten modules are:

1. Belonging and Integrating
2. Self Management
3. Communication Skills
4. Physical Health
5. Friendships
6. Relationships and Sexuality Education
7. Emotional Health
8. Influences and decisions
9. Substance abuse
10. 10 Personal safety.

In addition Relationship and Sexuality Education continues for a further two year in the Senior Cycle.

The Department of Education and Skills recognises that each school has flexibility within this framework to plan the SPHE programme in harmony with the students' needs and the school's resources.

4. Teaching Methods and timetabling

Because SPHE is primarily skills based, teaching methods must be of an experiential nature with an emphasis on discussion, reflection and classroom participation. These teaching methods will be student centred and appropriate to the age and development of the student.

The class atmosphere must be one of respect for the privacy of the individual, student and teacher and hallmarked by sensitivity and care. Any breach of this may result in the temporary removal of a student from the class. Arrangements for this will be compatible with school procedures.

SPHE is allocated one class per week for First, Second and Third years, preferably in the morning because of the nature of the subject.

RSE will be taught in three double class periods per year in Fourth year and in Fifth year, in groups of around twenty students. These will be sequential and will be taken from the timetabled Sports periods. They are not part of the Religion syllabus.

5. Staff Development, Training and Resourcing

The value placed on SPHE by the school will be evident by the commitment on the part of the management to develop a core of SPHE teachers and to appointing an SPHE co-ordinator. SPHE is enhanced when the appointment of teachers to the subject has been negotiated in advance of timetabling. Due to the importance of the teacher-student relationship in SPHE it is best practice to assign a teacher to a particular class for the three year cycle if at all possible. It is proposed to have a group of four to five teachers to cover the Junior Cycle if possible.

Students were keen that their SPHE teachers did not teach them any other subjects but this will not always be possible as the school recognises that the constraints of the timetable may not allow this.

It is noted that schools look for gender balance in SPHE teaching; this is important in role-modelling. Some students are happier with women teachers. All classes are gender mixed for SPHE and there is no gender splitting in the Junior Cycle. Some gender splitting could be desirable however in the Senior Cycle for certain topics. There would be an option to have single sex classes for one of the six Senior Cycle classes where a male teacher will teach the boys and a female teacher teach the girls.

6. Participation, Confidentiality, Referral, Sensitive Issues

6.1 Participation: SPHE is a core subject on the Junior Cycle curriculum. RSE is one module on the programme.

The aims of RSE are:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships.
- To promote an understanding of sexuality
- To promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and one's relationships with others
- To promote knowledge and respect for reproduction
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Parents have the option not to include their children in all modules of RSE. However, they however have to inform the school.

RSE is also compulsory for Fourth and Fifth year students. Again parents have the option to withdraw their children. Each student is automatically included in all RSE modules unless the parents request otherwise at the beginning of the school year. If a student the child is withdrawn, parents are encouraged to provide some RSE at home.

It will be necessary for parents who wish to withdraw a student from RSE to make suitable arrangements with school management for the supervision of the student at these times. Where students are withdrawn from RSE, the school cannot accept responsibility for any versions of class content passed onto them by other students. Details of the RSE programme are available for parents to view on request.

6.2 Confidentiality: While an atmosphere of trust is important, there are times when the teacher cannot promise confidentiality. The issues surrounding the following cannot be treated as confidential:

- (a) Child abuse: Physical, Emotional Sexual or Neglect. (See *Child Protection Guidelines*.)
- (b) Under age sexual intercourse (under 17 years for girls and boys).
- (c) Substance misuse as set out in our school policy.

SPHE teachers should inform students of these limits on confidentiality at the beginning of the school year and where possible before making disclosure.

6.3 Referral: While it is acknowledged that teachers have a professional responsibility to impart the SPHE course content, the needs of our students will be addressed in a caring and supportive manner. Where it is appropriate, the teacher may refer students to other supportive links, such as the Guidance Counsellor, within the school.

The teacher may inform the class of external services relevant to the class material, within the context of the ethos of St Flannan's College. This might include Helplines or Websites. Where an SPHE teacher is in doubt as to a course of action, they are encouraged to discuss the issue with school management, or the relevant Year Head or the school guidance counsellor.

6.4 Sensitive issues: Class discussion will be of a general nature and will not be personally directed in accordance with the previously agreed ground rules.

Inappropriate questions will not be answered in class by the teacher. Questions, however, should be encouraged where at all possible. This may include written questions. Answers will be in accordance with the school ethos. Teachers may use their own discretion in answering questions privately, but again this must be in harmony with the ethos of the school.

7. Role of visitors

Visiting speakers are seen as complimenting and supporting the SPHE programme in the school.

Teachers inviting speakers must:

- (a) Inform the Principal in advance.
- (b) Make the speaker aware of the ethos of the school.
- (c) Agree the content of the presentation.
- (d) Do preparatory and follow up work where possible.
- (e) Remain with the class group during the visit, except in exceptional circumstances.
- (f) Keep responsibility for discipline

The students remain the responsibility of the school.

8. Informing Parents and Students

Present students will be informed of this policy through their SPHE and RSE classes. Parents will be informed by letter of this policy. Thereafter the outline of the programme, appendix(a) and sections 4 and 6 of the policy will be sent out to parents of incoming students. They will be informed that they can view the entire policy on request.

9. Informing Staff

The policy will be available to all staff in the school by its inclusion with the policy documents on the staff server. Copies will be given to each SPHE teacher by the SPHE co-ordinator. The Parents Committee will also be advised.

10. Review and Evaluation of the SPHE programme and policy

The SPHE programme will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis by the SPHE group of teachers in line with the school's programme of School Development Planning and relevant legislation. The opinions of the students will be included as part of the review.

This policy was drawn up by representatives of Students, Parents, Board of Management and Staff.

11. Approval and review of the policy

This policy was approved by the Board of Management on 24 March 2015.

The policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in 2018.

Signed: *Con O'Donoghue*
Chairperson, Board of Management
Date: 24 March 2015

Signed: *Carmel Honan*
Principal
Date: 24 March 2015