



**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) provides students with an opportunity to develop their understanding of themselves and others. It also allows them to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. It helps students grow and develop as individuals in their relationship to others.

The SPHE course aims to:

- Build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth
- Develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will support them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives
- Empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships with self and others
- Enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society.

These aims are consistent with the Mission Statement of St Flannan's College and support the development of the Junior Cycle Key Skills and Wellbeing Indicators contributing to the holistic development of students.

This policy has been informed by the school's Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy, AUP, Bí Cinnealta Anti Bullying Policy, Substance Use Policy and Visitors to the School Policy.

3. Outline of the Programme Content

The SPHE programme is currently comprised of four strands in Junior Cycle. These strands are revisited each year as the student matures. Each individual's needs, abilities and values are important in all four strands while emphasis will be on developing skills, understanding, attitudes and values important to these areas.

The four strands are:

1. Understanding Myself and Others
2. Making Healthy Choices
3. Relationships and Sexuality (RSE)
4. Emotional Wellbeing

In addition, Relationship and Sexuality Education continues for a further two years at Senior Cycle.

The Department of Education 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

SPHE is taught using student-centred and experiential teaching methodologies, with an emphasis on awareness, dialogue, reflection and action. These approaches encourage active participation and the development of practical life skills, while supporting students' personal, social and emotional development in an age-appropriate and supportive learning environment.

A positive school climate is essential to the effective delivery of SPHE. Within this environment, respect, tolerance, fairness and open communication are promoted, while students are encouraged to value diversity, develop self-awareness and build positive relationships with themselves and others.

SPHE teachers aim to promote students' self-esteem, wellbeing and responsible decision-making, while providing opportunities for discussion, collaboration and personal reflection. The programme supports students in developing the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions necessary to lead healthy, fulfilling and responsible lives.

The atmosphere in SPHE classes is one of mutual respect, sensitivity and care, where the privacy and dignity of both students and teachers are respected at all times. Any breach of this may be addressed in line with the school's Code of Behaviour and relevant school procedures.

As per the Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course Specification 2023, the recommended time allocation for Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course is 100 hours.

SPHE is allocated as follows in St Flannan's College:

- One class (40 minutes) period per week for 1st Years.
- One class (40 minutes) period per week for 2nd Years.
- One class (40 minutes) period per week for 3rd Years.

5. Staff Development, Training and Resourcing

St Flannan's College recognises the importance of SPHE in supporting the holistic development and wellbeing of students and is committed to supporting the ongoing development of the programme within the school. The school supports the appointment of an SPHE Co-ordinator and encourages the development of a committed team of SPHE teachers.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is considered essential to the effective delivery of SPHE. Teachers are encouraged and supported to engage in ongoing professional learning and to avail of relevant CPD opportunities in order to remain informed of current best practice, curriculum developments and available resources.

The SPHE Co-ordinator will communicate relevant CPD opportunities and resources to staff, while school management will support teacher engagement with CPD where possible. Where feasible, best practice is to maintain continuity of teacher assignment with class groups across the Junior Cycle programme.

6. Communication with Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians will be informed at the beginning of each school year about the SPHE programme through the *SPHE Programme 2025 – Information for Parents/Guardians* document, which will be communicated via the school app.

Parents/Guardians will also be notified through the school app in advance of individual classes or year groups beginning the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) module.

This communication supports partnership between the school and home and ensures that Parents/Guardians are aware of the content and aims of the SPHE and RSE programme.

7. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values relating to relationships, intimacy, sexuality and identity. Within the school setting, RSE forms an integral part of the SPHE programme and supports the social, personal and emotional development of students. It seeks to promote respect, responsibility, healthy relationships and informed decision-making in a safe and age-appropriate manner.

7.1 Participation

SPHE is a core element of the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme in St Flannan's College. The programme supports students in developing the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values necessary for their wellbeing, relationships and participation in society. Learning in SPHE includes topics relating to emotional wellbeing, relationships, sexuality, gender identity, online life and decision-making, delivered in an age-appropriate and respectful manner in line with the Junior Cycle SPHE specification.

Parents/Guardians will be informed of the content of the SPHE programme. In line with Department of Education guidelines, parents/guardians may request that their child be withdrawn from specific

aspects of learning relating to Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Such requests should be made in writing to school management. Where a student is withdrawn, parents/guardians are encouraged to provide appropriate learning at home. Arrangements for supervision during these classes remain the responsibility of Parents/Guardians in consultation with school management.

7.2 Confidentiality

A relationship of trust and respect is important in SPHE classes. However, teachers cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Students will be informed that where a disclosure raises a concern regarding the safety, welfare or protection of a student, the teacher is obliged to follow the school's Child Protection procedures and inform the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

SPHE teachers will clarify these limits of confidentiality at the beginning of the school year and, where appropriate, before sensitive topics are discussed.

7.3 Referral

SPHE teachers have a responsibility to support students in a caring and appropriate manner while maintaining professional boundaries. Where concerns arise regarding a student's wellbeing, teachers may refer the student to appropriate supports within the school, such as the Guidance Counsellor, Year Head, Student Support Team, or school management, in line with school procedures.

Information on external support agencies, helplines and services may also be shared with students where relevant and appropriate.

7.4 Sensitive Issues

SPHE classes aim to provide a safe, inclusive and respectful environment where sensitive issues may be explored in an age-appropriate manner. Discussion will be conducted in accordance with agreed class ground rules, with due respect for the privacy and dignity of all students and staff.

Questions from students are encouraged and may be addressed through discussion or anonymous question boxes where appropriate. Teachers will use professional judgement in responding to questions and will ensure that all content is addressed in a manner consistent with the ethos of St Flannan's College, the SPHE curriculum and Department of Education guidelines.

8. Role of Visitors

Visiting speakers and external agencies are viewed as complementing and supporting the SPHE programme in St Flannan's College. Their contribution is intended to enhance students' learning and wellbeing by providing additional expertise and perspectives relevant to the SPHE curriculum.

Teachers inviting visiting speakers must:

- Seek prior approval from the Principal.
- Ensure that the content of the presentation is age-appropriate and consistent with the ethos of the school and the aims of the SPHE programme.
- Agree the content and format of the presentation in advance.
- Undertake preparatory and follow-up work where appropriate to support students' learning.
- Remain present with the class group during the visit, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Retain responsibility for student supervision and discipline at all times.

The students remain the responsibility of the school throughout all visits and presentations.

9. Informing Parents and Students

Students will be informed of this policy through SPHE and RSE classes. Parents/guardians may access the policy on the school website or request a copy from the school office.

10. Informing Staff

This policy will be available to all staff through the school's policy documentation on the staff server. Copies will also be provided to SPHE teachers by the SPHE Co-Ordinator. The Parents' Association will be informed of the policy.

11. Evaluation of the SPHE Programme and Policy

The SPHE Programme will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis and will include input from staff, students and Parents/ Guardians.

12. Approval and review of the policy

This policy was approved by the Board of Management on September 29, 2026.

This policy will be reviewed in 2027

Signed: *Mr. Leonard Cleary*
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: *29/09/2026*

Signed: *Mr. Donal Cahir*
Principal

Date: *29/09/2026*