



JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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John Scottus Secondary School

SPHE and RSE Policy

John Scottus School offers a vision of education which gives young people the self mastery, strength of character and compassion to contribute meaningfully to the world around them. It is an education based on the belief that each child can come to discover and express their innate gifts: that each child can come to contribute something unique and exceptional and that each child has at their heart a limitless potential.

Central to the ethos of the school is character development through cultivating the life skills of stillness, attention and enquiry. This takes place by emphasising the importance of coming to know your true self, of discovering your true limitless essence and coming to know that we are united in oneness through this essence.

Mindfulness along with philosophy and meditation are considered the 3 key aspects in the journey of self-discovery. The mindful motto of the school is “Delight in the present” and the belief is that when a child comes to know their true self it is possible to delight in the present every moment of every day.

1. Introduction:

The Ethos of the School dictates that SPHE and RSE be taken very seriously as a key life skill, based on the values and capacity for mature decision-making by the individual concerned in the context of their home their school community, wider community and nation.

The way this School regards the range of needs of its students, parents and teachers within the school community defines this school’s practical philosophy, which is also known as the school's ethos or characteristic spirit. Out of the unique and ever-changing mix of students, teachers and parents is forged the characteristic spirit of the individual school.

Equally, it is not just the content of the course that is run that actually impresses and helps the student in their life decisions – it is the way in which it is delivered, the questions that are put, the way in which the answers of the students are taken by the teacher that determines the success of the programme, which is to define their values and develop good decision making.

Social, Personal and Health Education

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) contributes to developing the work of the school in promoting the health and well-being of children and young people. This happens in the context of their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual, physical, and creative development. A supportive school climate, where the needs and well-being of all members of the school community are considered, is essential to the best possible provision for SPHE.

Social, Personal and Health Education looks at relationships at home and in school, builds self-esteem, and the learning skills of communication, decision-making and expressing feelings in an appropriate way.

It also includes giving clear information on a range of topics, including healthy eating, alcohol, drugs, human growth and development, safety and social responsibility, and environmental issues.

Relationships and Sexuality Education

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. This education is delivered consciously and unconsciously by parents, teachers, peers, adults and the media.

In John Scottus School, RSE provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

At post-primary level, John Scottus builds on the primary programme and provides young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and so make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives.

In the school setting, RSE is taught in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education.

2. SPHE Programme

Social, Personal and Health Education is part of an education process that provides students with the opportunity to develop a sense of personal identity, self-esteem and the ability to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development.

SPHE provide learning opportunities and experiences which help students' social, moral, cultural and personal development. It should assist student growth and development as individual people and in their relationship to others as a family member, friend, peer or member of society.

Aims of SPHE Programme

The aims of SPHE aims are

- To enable the students to develop personal and social skills
- 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 well being

School Provision

From 1st Year through to 6th Year, the SPHE program is delivered through assembly and weekly meetings with each class teacher. It is also supplemented by visits from visiting speakers at Assembly.

Elements of SPHE and/or RSE programme are also approached during:

Philosophy: Decision making based on a complete understanding of 'Self'. This is the first and major work of the Philosophy in the School, to understand "Who I am, What this Creation is and What is my relationship to it".

School developed Short Course in Wellbeing: Self Awareness, Yoga, Ayurvedic medicine

Biology/Science: Reproductive Biology; Ecology; pollution; respiration and lung Biology; Diseases of many of the human biological system caused by lack of exercise, obesity etc.

Civic, Social and Political Education: responsibility for the use of the Earth's resources; awareness of others and of their needs, often different to our own.

Guidance and Counselling: choices in further education and career; Mental health issues.

Physical Education: team spirit; healthy lifestyle including regular fitness training.

Teaching SPHE

Learning methods and teaching methodologies will be of an active nature and will emphasise discussion, reflection and student participation in a manner appropriate to the age and needs of the students. The SPHE class environment will foster respect for the privacy of individual students and will be a safe learning environment for all students.

In particular, discussion and reflection will take place along the following ground rules:

- Discover the best idea. The aim is to uncover the truth, not to win an argument. This is a joint endeavour.
- Ask questions. In the discovery of truth good questions are more powerful than lengthy speeches. Question all assumptions rather than proceeding from those assumptions.
- Listen with full attention. Really understand the viewpoint of another.
- Delight in being proved wrong. Be willing to be refuted and to refute others

The learning and teaching methodologies employed will include:

- Artwork
- Brainstorming
- Case studies
- Debates
- Games – Icebreakers
- Games – Simulation
- Group discussions
- Narrative expression

- Project work
- Reflection
- Role play
- Visualisation
- Walking debates

In the light of the advice contained in Circular 0023/2010, the following approaches will be avoided when teaching SPHE:

- Didactic approaches
- Information only interventions
- Information that is not age appropriate
- Normalising young people's risky behaviour
- Once-off/short term interventions
- Testimonials
- Scare tactics
- Sensationalist approaches

The SPHE Programme at Junior Cycle

The Structure of the Junior Cycle SPHE Module Programme includes:

- Belonging and Integrating
- Self-management – A sense of purpose
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendship
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- Substance Use
- Personal Safety

The SPHE Programme at Senior Level

The aim of SPHE in Senior cycle is to 'support students in making choices for health and wellbeing'. Students should be able to make links between what they learn in 'SPHE, the school, home, the wider community and virtual communities'. As with Junior Cycle SPHE the programme seeks to ensure that the needs of the various partners in the process of education are met. Senior Cycle SPHE builds on the students' prior learning in early to mid adolescence and addresses and examines social, personal and health issues and concerns from mid to late adolescence/early adulthood reflecting increased awareness of a changing society. Building on the junior cycle programme cross-curricular links, as relevant, should be

emphasised so that the students develop an ‘appreciation of the integrated nature of their lives and the value of different perspectives’.

An important aim of the senior SPHE programme is to enable students to cope in a constructive way with challenges that they may encounter in life when in school and after leaving school such as peer pressure, conflict, loss and personal stress etcetera.

The curriculum framework in senior cycle SPHE is based on five areas of learning. These are:

- Mental Health
- Gender Studies
- Substance Use
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Physical Activity and Nutrition

SPHE Workshops and Visiting Speakers/Facilitators

John Scottus recognises that visiting speakers/facilitators play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting our programme. Visitors/visiting groups are required to adhere to the following guidelines for good practice:

- All visits will be planned in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE programmes.
- Visitors to the school will be made aware of the SPHE/RSE policy and other policies as relevant.
- Talks/programmes delivered by external speakers/agencies must be consistent with the ethos of John Scottus and the SPHE/RSE programmes. All visits must be planned with school personnel.
- A teacher(s) must remain in the classroom with the student group.
- All programmes and events delivered by visitors and external agencies must use appropriate, evidence-based methodologies with clear educational outcomes. Such programmes are best delivered by those specially qualified to work with young people for whom the programmes are designed.
- All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

SPHE Teacher Training

The Board of Management will endeavour to provide the necessary resources to support the SPHE programme. School management will encourage and facilitate SPHE teachers to attend In-service training to support delivery and ongoing development of the SPHE programme.

Whole School Support for SPHE

John Scottus is a school that places the development of Wellbeing as core aspect of education. Some examples of this include:

- Student Representatives induction and training
- First Year induction Programme
- Pastoral Care Programme
- Guidance Department workshops
- Mentoring Programmes
- Philosophy Week
- Meditation and Mindfulness Programmes
- Extra-curricular Physical Education Programme
- Evening talks for parents/guardians as organised by school/by parents

3. RSE Programme

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge and understanding, and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

The RSE programme in both Junior and Senior cycle SPHE teaches the dignity and beauty of human sexuality through delivery of the curriculum and through a diversity of learning methodologies in an age appropriate way. Students learn to cultivate a healthy attitude towards themselves and others, particularly in the area of sexuality and relationships.

The aim is firstly for accurate information to be known and understood by the students in our School, so that 'ignorance of the facts' can never be a cause of bad decision making. Secondly, the School wishes to help the student to grow from the inside out: to establish a clear view of 'Self', distinguish real Self from false self, Big Self from small self. Once there is some clarity that only by reference to the biggest contexts possible are the very best decisions made, i.e. decisions for the benefit of the greater good, then real benefit accrues not just to the individual but to the wider community too.

Reason is the master key to good decision making. Reason is the tool whereby philosophy establishes practical values in the life of the individual student. In its light, what was unclear becomes clear and it is possible to see issues in a very different light. Hence, Philosophy finds a valid and valuable place in the SPHE/RSE course, and at the same time philosophy benefits by being practical instead of being a rather pale and theoretical shadow of itself.

Hence the School prefers to allow Reason to develop and govern the hearts and minds of the students, rather than giving them a set of 'do's and 'don't's.

There is neither a liberal nor a conservative attitude by the teachers, but only a question of what behaviour leads to the greatest long term happiness for all. Such an approach helps when dealing with

controversial issues such as sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancy, marriage, separation and divorce. Such an approach also helps not to lose the often good relationship that exists up to 12 years of age between child and parent, but which may deteriorate at least for a while in the 12-15 age group.

Rationale for RSE

RSE seeks to provide young people with formal opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of human sexuality through processes that will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework.

Education about relationships and sexuality is delivered in both formal and informal settings by parents/guardians, teachers, peers, adults and the media. The school recognises that the primary providers of such education are parents/guardians and that the home is the natural environment for such education. Within the school, it is acknowledged that formal and informal processes of relationships and sexuality education take place as outlined in this policy.

RSE Programme

The RSE programme is based on the RSE modules at Junior and Senior Cycle as set out by the Department of Education and Skills.

Relationships and Sexuality Education takes place within the framework of Junior Cycle SPHE.

At senior cycle, Relationships and Sexuality Education is integrated into the SPHE programme developed by the school.

Formal Provision of RSE

The formal provision of RSE means involves providing young people with information and skills to critically evaluate the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, and so make positive and responsible choices about themselves and the way to live their lives.

Throughout the years, students are introduced to relationships and sexuality education in an age appropriate manner. RSE should enable 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 the difference between individuals
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle and human fertility
- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality and sexual orientation including sex role stereotyping and an introduction to gender issues

- Value family life, the changing nature of the family 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.

A modular approach is used to implement RSE. Modules in RSE are delivered during the Philosophy course.

Informal Provision of RSE

Through the school philosophy, RSE helps to foster a sense of responsibility among the students, to promote high standards in personal behaviour, to ensure that uniqueness and difference is valued, to promote social and moral values while ensuring that attention is paid to the well-being of all members of the school community.

Ongoing Support, Development and Review of RSE

It is the policy of the school that staff teaching RSE should be appropriately trained. Support from school management for ongoing in-career development of SPHE/RSE teachers is vital for effective delivery of a relevant, informed and valuable RSE programme. This is provided by encouraging and enabling teachers to attend all relevant courses.

RSE Workshops and Visiting Speakers/Facilitators

John Scottus recognises that visiting speakers/facilitators play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting our programme. Visitors/visiting groups are required to adhere to the following guidelines for good practice:

- All visits will be planned in line with the relevant whole-school SPHE/RSE programmes.
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- All programmes, talks, interventions and events should be evaluated by students and teachers in terms of subject matter, messages, structure, methodology and proposed learning outcomes.

4. Provide For Ongoing Support, Development And Review

The School is committed to:

- ensure access to in-career development opportunities for teachers and the policy committee
- provide relevant RSE school resources.

The SPHE programme will seek to ensure that the needs of the various partners in the process of education are met. These partners include the students, staff, parents/guardians, Board of Management and Trustees, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Health and Children.

Approved by the Board of Management: May 2022

Appendix 1 – Outline of Junior Cycle SPHE/RSE Module Syllabus

Strand	Topics
Who am I?	How I see myself Being an adolescent Self-Management My rights and the rights of others
Minding myself and others	Being healthy Substance Use Respectful communication Anti-bullying
Team Up	Having a friend and being a friend The relationship spectrum Sexuality, gender identity and sexual health Media influences on relationship and sexuality
My Mental Health	Positive mental health Mental health and mental ill-health Dealing with tough times Loss Bereavement

NCCA Short Course Description - <https://curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Short-Courses/SPHE/>

Appendix 2 – Outline of Senior Cycle SPHE/RSE Syllabus

Module	<i>TY</i>	<i>Fifth Year</i>	<i>6th Year</i>
Substance Use and Misuse	Alcohol and its effects on health Peer pressure and decision making Smoking Impact of legal drugs Addiction	Classifying Drugs	Alcohol and its effects on health Addiction and misuse, social and personal implications
Physical Activity and Nutrition	Healthy food choices Body image and self-esteem Active lifestyles Physical Health and Well-being	Diet and Emotional Well-being	Choosing a healthy diet/healthy eating – links to wellbeing, stamina, performance /level of motivation, overall health and absence of illness
Mental Health	Mental Health and Well-being Anxiety and Stress Bereavement Managing negative emotions	Self-esteem Mental health and mental illness Coping with stress Relaxation	Self-Awareness Self-Esteem Stress Management
Relationships and Sexuality	Health and unhealthy relationships Relationship skills Fertility and reproduction, health and pregnancy introduction to contraception Female health and hygiene Making decisions and peer pressure <i>Personal rights and safety</i> : being safe in school, the community; Human rights, respecting the rights of others , sexual identity	Health and unhealthy relationships Relationship skills Effective communication in relationships Peer pressure, impact of social media on relationships Adolescence/puberty, menstrual cycle and fertility Contraception STIs, safer sexual practice LGBT	Health and unhealthy relationships Relationship skills Fertility, reproduction, health Contraception
Gender Studies	Defining gender Male and female responses to decision making Respecting different	Gender and sex Gender stereotyping Gender equality, LGBT Gender and culture influences	Male and female experiences of health and well-being