



Mol an Óige CNS SPHE Policy

Introduction

As a Community National School, we believe that every child has the right to a safe, positive, and nurturing learning environment. Our school aims to provide a safe space where all students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. To achieve this goal, we have developed a comprehensive SPHE policy that outlines our commitment to creating a culture of care, respect, and responsibility. This policy was originally drafted by the SPHE co-ordinator in May 2023, it was then circulated to staff, discussed at a staff meeting and amended by the whole staff, parents and school management. This policy aims to ensure that learning and teaching of this curricular area across the school are consistent, progressive and meets the principles outlined in the Primary School Curriculum.

Steiner Ethos

Our school also incorporates the principles of the Steiner ethos, which emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to education that integrates the academic, artistic, and practical aspects of learning. We believe that this approach promotes creativity, imagination, and critical thinking skills while also fostering a sense of community and connection with nature.

Rationale

Our SPHE policy is based on the belief that promoting the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of our students is essential to their academic success and overall happiness. We recognize that every child is unique and that their wellbeing depends on a range of factors, including their home life, relationships, and environment. Therefore, we have developed a

comprehensive SPHE program that is tailored to the individual needs of our students.

Vision

Our vision for SPHE is to create a safe and nurturing learning environment that promotes the holistic development of our students. We aim to foster a culture of respect, compassion, and responsibility where every child feels valued and supported. Community National Schools (CNS) are state, co-educational, multi-denominational primary schools underpinned by the core values of **excellence in education, care, equality, community and respect**.

Aims

Our SPHE program has the following aims:

- To promote the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of our students.
- To develop positive relationships and a sense of community within the school.
- To empower students to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing.
- To promote resilience, self-esteem, and confidence.
- To develop social and emotional intelligence.
- To provide opportunities for students to learn about and appreciate diversity.

Strands and Strand Units

Our SPHE program is divided into three strands:

1. Myself
2. Myself and Others
3. Myself and the Wider World

Each strand is further divided into strand units, which are taught throughout the school year. Some examples of strand units include:

- Developing a positive sense of self

- Managing my feelings
- Developing positive relationships
- Communicating effectively
- Making decisions
- Understanding and promoting physical activity
- Staying safe online

Discrete time for SPHE

SPHE is allocated 1/2 hour per week on each teacher's timetable. However, teachers may choose to allocate 1 hour per fortnight to allow for more in-depth exploration of a strand unit.

Integration with other subject areas and Linkage within SPHE

At each class level, teachers should integrate S.P.H.E. with other curricular areas. Many aspects of S.P.H.E can be dealt with within the context of relevant subject areas. Opportunities for integration are referred to in the Curriculum at the end of each strand unit. In their planning, teachers will refer to and plan for such opportunities.

Suggested ways in which this can be achieved include:

- English Language: using language precisely; acquiring appropriate vocabulary; developing communication skills; learning how to question, to predict, to be critical and to analyse; developing one's imagination and exploring emotions and feelings through the spoken and written word; examining the print media
- Mathematics: interpreting and representing data; measuring and estimating; comparing and recording; solving problems
- History: developing empathy; exploring changing influences on our lives; learning about the factors that shape the community; exploring the various contributions of different groups to society; exploring myself and my family

- Geography: developing a sense of place; exploring local and national issues; developing an appreciation of different national, religious and cultural groups; learning to care for the environment
- Science: exploring: the way the body works, the constituents of different foods, the process of physical growth and development; learning to care for the environment
- Visual arts: creating and exploring images and pictures; expressing ideas, feelings and experiences in visual form; looking at and enjoying images in the environment
- Drama: using drama to recognise and manage feelings, to learn to trust and respect others in a group; to experience open and healthy relationships; to foster respect for differences in people; and to help the child understand and moderate his/her temperament.
- Music: using music to explore moods and feelings; understanding the role of music in our heritage; exploring music as a form of universal communication; developing self-expression and a sense of well-being through music; making decisions; taking individual and group responsibility through composing
- Physical Education: choosing teams and playing games in a fair manner; understanding physical exercise as necessary for overall health and wellbeing; developing individual skills and talents; developing self-esteem and self-confidence; providing opportunities for co-operation and interaction; appreciating the importance of safety and learning how to act safely

Contexts

SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts:

1. Positive school climate and atmosphere
2. Discrete time
3. Links to Goodness Me, Goodness You
4. Integration with other subject areas

(See *SPHE Curriculum p. 11, Teacher Guidelines: SPHE p. 5, pp.31 – 32, 36 – 41*)

Positive school climate and atmosphere will contribute hugely to the development of the SPHE curriculum. At Mol an Óige CNS we encourage a positive climate and atmosphere through:

- Building effective communication within the school
- Catering for individual needs of the children
- Creating a health-promoting physical environment
- Developing democratic processes
- Enhancing self-esteem
- Fostering respect for diversity
- Fostering inclusive and respectful language
- Developing appropriate communication between home and school

Approaches & Methodologies

Staff at Mol an Óige CNS believe that the approaches and methodologies used in SPHE are crucial to the effectiveness of the programme. Active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach recommended for SPHE, therefore we will endeavour to teach SPHE using a variety of strategies which include:

- drama activities, role-play
- co-operative games
- use of pictures, photographs and visual images
- written activities
- use of media
- information technologies
- looking at children's work
- discussion
- project work
- circle time

School assemblies will provide opportunities to acknowledge a pupil's academic as well as wider achievements e.g. recognition of awards received outside of school, good manners, friendship skills.

Assessment & Record Keeping

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

Mola n Óige CNS uses the following recommended informal tools for assessment in SPHE:

- Teacher observation
- Teacher-designed tasks and tests
- Portfolios and projects
- Presentation of children's work
- Peer Assessment/Self-assessment

Teacher observation might focus on:

- the ability of the child to co-operate and work in groups or to work independently
- the informal interactions between the child and adults and between the child and other children
- particular interests or aptitudes displayed by the child
- the participation and interest of the child in a variety of activities
- the level of personal or social responsibility exhibited by the child
- the reliability of the child in carrying out established routines
- the perseverance of the child in carrying out a task

- the child's awareness of the difficulties of others and his/her willingness to help
- the questions the child asks and the responses the child makes to questions and suggestions made by the teacher
- various behaviour, for example, shyness, leadership ability, level of self-confidence, the tendency to be anxious, sense of fair play, assertiveness, aggression, readiness to take risks and meet challenges
- physical and emotional maturity
- the ability of the child to engage in assessing his/her progress and reflecting on his/her learning.

(SPHE Teacher Guidelines, p.79)

Children with Additional Needs

Teachers will endeavour to adapt and modify activities and methodologies in SPHE to encourage participation by children with different needs. The SETs in the school will supplement the work of the class teachers where necessary. Staff will liaise with trained professionals/appropriate agencies when dealing with sensitive issues such as bereavement (e.g. **The Rainbows service** is an inclusive service, supporting children and young people experiencing grief and loss resulting from bereavement/parental separation/parental relationship breakdown /divorce).

Teachers may decide that a particular intervention would benefit children who may have behavioural, self-esteem or anxiety difficulties. Interventions such as Friends for Life may be taught at a whole class level or during individual/ group withdrawal time in order to support these children.

Stay Safe Program

One important component of our SPHE policy is the annual Stay Safe Program. This program is designed to teach children the skills and knowledge they need to stay safe and healthy. Every class, from junior infants to sixth class, participates in the Stay Safe Program each year. The program covers a range of topics, including:

- **Third and Fourth Classes**
- **Fifth and Sixth Classes**

The curriculum is divided into **three main strands**:

1. **Myself**
2. **Myself and Others**
3. **Myself and the Wider World**

Each strand is further broken down into **strand units** (topic areas), which contain specific learning objectives.

At **Mol an Oige CNS**, all three strands are covered each year. Strand units are selected to ensure students receive a **comprehensive SPHE programme over a two-year cycle**.

- The school follows a **two-year rotating plan**, referred to as **Year 1** and **Year 2**.
- This allows for full coverage of the SPHE curriculum while ensuring age-appropriate and developmentally suitable topics.

Additional Notes:

- Some topics (e.g., **anti-bullying**) may be addressed outside of the timetable as needs arise.

Year 1 applies to **odd-numbered academic years**:

e.g. 2023/2024

Year 2 applies to **even-numbered academic years**:

e.g. 2024/2025, 2026/2027

Year 1: 2023/2024

Year 2: 2024/2025

Year 3: 2025/2026

Year 4: 2026/2027

School Roadmap

Month	Year 1 – Strand and Strand Unit	Year 2 – Strand and Strand Unit
September-October	Myself Self-Identity - Self-Awareness - Developing Self-confidence - Making decisions - Classroom Rules	Myself and Others My Friends and Other People - Friendship and Bullying - Treating Others with dignity and respect - Peer Pressure - Classroom Rules
November-December	Myself and Others Myself and My Family - How families look after each other - Different Types of Families - How families live at home - Communicating - Changes that happen in families - Family life in other countries	Myself and Others Relating to Others - Making friends/meeting new people - Manners - Empathy and Understanding - Listening to each other - Expressing opinions - Compliments - Conflict resolution
January-March	Myself Safety and Protection – <i>Stay Safe</i> - Feeling Safe and Unsafe - Friendship and Bullying - Touches - Secrets and Telling - Strangers RSE – 4th, 5th and 6th Classes only – Sensitive areas of RSE Fourth Class – Menstruation Fifth Class – Puberty Sixth Class – Sexual Intercourse	Myself Taking care of my body – RSE - Knowing about my body - Food and Nutrition - Health and Wellbeing Growing and Changing – Sensitive areas of RSE - Feelings and emotions - As I grow I change - New Life - Making Decisions RSE – 4th, 5th and 6th Classes only – Sensitive areas of RSE Fourth Class – Menstruation Fifth Class – Puberty Sixth Class – Sexual Intercourse
April-May	Myself Safety and Protection - Personal Safety - Safety Issues - The consequences of risky behaviour - Rights and responsibilities - Making Decisions	Myself and the Wider World Media Education - Cyber Safety - Cyberbullying

June	Myself and the Wider World Developing Citizenship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My School Community - Living in the local community - Environmental Care - Local and wider communities (3rd / 4th) - National, European and wider communities (5th / 6th) 	Myself and the Wider World Media Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distinguish between fact and fiction - The Power of advertising
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Resources

We use a range of resources to support the implementation of our SPHE policy, including textbooks, workbooks, videos, and online resources where appropriate. We also make use of community resources, such as guest speakers and local organizations, to enhance our SPHE program. The Stay Safe Programme will be taught in its entirety.

The following resources may be used to help with the teaching of the objectives from the 1999 curriculum:

- RSE Manuals
- Walk Tall Manuals
- Stay Safe Manuals
- Busy Bodies
- Webwise
- www.digizen.org
- <http://cybersafeireland.org/>: talks for children & parents
- www.thinkuknow.co.uk: parents' videos to watch with children. E.g. jigsaw
- Games Children Play
- Visits from Community Guard
- Visits from Firemen
- Be Safe Manual JI-6th (road, fire & water safety)
- Seatbelt Sheriff – RSA (1st Class)
- Hi Glo Silver – RSA (2nd Class): theme is about being seen
- High Vis Vests for all new JI
- Restorative Practice
- Wellbeing in Primary Schools (NEPS)
- Stay Safe Parents Guide (available in different languages on website)
- Fun Friends: Suitable from JI – 2nd

- Friend's For Life: Suitable from 3rd – 6th class
- Healing Stories for Challenging Behaviour
- A Calendar of Festivals
- Quality Circle Time – Jenny Mosley
- GMGY
- Talkabout
- The Incredible Years
- Positive behaviour initiatives
- Mindfulness & Meditation
- Yoga & Gratitude practice
- Guest Speakers
- Visits from local Garda
- Staff, BoM and PTA Meetings
- SPHE resource list from the PDST:

<https://www.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/SPHE%20Resources%202015.pdf>

Staff Development

We believe that ongoing professional development is essential for our teachers to deliver a high-quality SPHE program. Therefore, we provide regular training and support to our staff to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills they need to teach SPHE effectively. Teachers have access to current research, reference books, resource materials, and websites dealing with SPHE. Teachers have the opportunity to share their skills/expertise/experience and avail of internal and/or external expertise to inform and up skill the school community.

Parental Involvement – Home School Links

Parental involvement is considered an integral part to effectively implementing SPHE. Staff at Mol an Óige CNS believe that SPHE is a shared responsibility. This plan and the curriculum documents are available for parents to inform them of the programme for SPHE. Parental consent is not required for any element of the SPHE curriculum, but parents are informed two weeks before sensitive lessons including RSE and Stay Safe are taught in class.

If per the Education Act, 1998, Section 30 (2)(e), a parent wishes to withdraw their child from lessons of any SPHE programme, including Stay Safe and RSE, they will first be informed of the following:

- That the school cannot prevent the child from hearing the language being used or discussed by other children outside of these lessons
- That we would recommend that they attend, so that they learn the factually accurate information, rather than hearing inaccurate information from other sources
- It is their duty now to take full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves

If a parent wishes to withdraw their child for the sensitive lessons, they must first organise a meeting with the principal to discuss their concerns. If they still wish to withdraw their child, they will sign a withdrawal form (See **Appendix**) and return it to the school principal. Their decision will be honoured on the understanding that the parent is taking full responsibility for this aspect of education themselves. This form will need to be completed each year that the child is withdrawn. The child will be accommodated in another teacher's classroom in the school.

Policies

Policies that support the teaching of SPHE at Mol an Óige CNS include:

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- RSE Policy
- Child Protection Policy

Review

Our SPHE policy is reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. We seek feedback from students, parents, and staff to identify areas for improvement and make necessary changes.

Ratification

Our SPHE policy was developed in consultation with our school community and has been ratified by our board of management. We are committed to implementing this policy to the best of our ability and to continuously improving our SPHE program to meet the needs of our students.

The Board of Management of Mol an Óige CNS ratified this plan on _____

Signed 
Chairperson, BOM

Date 12/05/25

Conclusion

Our SPHE policy is an integral part of our school's commitment to creating a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment. By incorporating the principles of the Steiner ethos and the annual Stay Safe Program, we are confident that we can provide our students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to thrive both in school and in life.