

***Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan***  
***January 2019***  
***Policy Statement on Social, Personal Health Education and***  
***Relationships and Sexuality Education.***

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath is a Catholic Secondary School under the trusteeship of Sisters of Mercy.

**School Philosophy**

Mercy Secondary School, Kilbeggan aims to create a happy environment for every learner. We aim to constantly strengthen our capacity to be a healthy setting for learning and working, by focusing on all the conditions that effect health. We aim to create a positive school climate and atmosphere. In such an environment: -

- People feel valued
- Self-esteem is fostered
- High expectations and standards are promoted
- Uniqueness and difference are valued
- Social, moral and civic values are promoted

Through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme the school aims to support the personal development, health and well-being of our students and help them create and maintain supportive relationships.

**The Aims of SPHE**

- To develop students' positive sense of themselves and their physical, social, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing.
- To build the capacity of young people to develop and maintain healthy relationships.
- To enable students to develop skills for self-fulfilment and living in the community
- To promote self-esteem and self-confidence
- To enable students to develop a framework for responsibility and for responsible decision-making
- To promote opportunities for reflection & discussion
- To incorporate into students' education, the life-skills necessary to lead balanced and healthy lives

SPHE is made up of four strands. These strands are revisited each year as the students mature and their needs and abilities change. The emphasis will be on building skills and understanding attitudes and values important in all these areas and meeting the SPHE learning outcomes.

### **Four Strands in SPHE**

- **Strand 1:** Who am I?
- **Strand 2:** Minding myself and others
- **Strand 3:** Team Up
- **Strand 4:** My mental health

These four strands will constitute a Short Course at Junior Cycle that will follow the assessment guidelines as set down by the New Junior Cycle Framework for Short Courses. This short course will comprise of 100 hours tuition time over the three years of Junior Cycle. This is enabled through one one hour class per week in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Year. This 100 hours forms part of the overall 400 hours of Well Being delivered to students over the course of their Junior Cycle.

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) module is in the overall framework of SPHE. Senior Cycle students will receive RSE through their **Religion** programme.

Through RSE, the school aims to provide opportunities for students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral caring and responsible way.

### **The Aims of RSE**

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

## **RSE Programme Content**

The developmental stage of the students as well as their social and cultural context will be considered in the planning of the school programme. Teachers will use materials deemed suitable and appropriate for student needs and in accordance with school ethos.

The content of RSE is described under three themes. These themes are neither sequential nor discrete, they merge and overlap with each other.

### **1. Human Growth and Development**

This theme consists of an age appropriate understanding of the biology and psychology of the human life cycle. This is accompanied by a rationale for responsible behaviour in relationships and sexual activity.

### **2. Human Sexuality**

Sexuality is an integral part of the human personality and has biological, psychological, cultural, social and spiritual dimensions. The theme offers opportunities to develop a holistic understanding of sexuality as contributing to the development of personal well-being, enhancing personal and family relationships and ultimately contributing to the well being of society.

### **3. Human Relationships**

This theme focuses on the importance of relationships for health and well-being. It examines how one relates to oneself and others, stressing the importance of self-esteem as a basis for worthwhile friendships and relationships. It addresses issues such as communication, influence, intimacy, sexual attraction and sexual expression in relationships consistent with personal and moral integrity.

## **What the School Currently Provides**

There are aspects of the SPHE/RSE programme addressed in other subject areas such as Religion, Home Economics, Science, CSPE, PE, etc The programme is also supported through the Student Mentoring System and Guidance Counsellor. The strong tradition of music and sports contribute to the personal development of students.

## **Guidelines for the Management and Organisation of SPHE in the School**

- In organising the learning environment the teacher will be careful to create an atmosphere which respects the privacy of each individual student and treats all students with due sensitivity and care. Active learning methods will be used to ensure that students actively participate in their own learning.
- Contemporary topics and issues, which may emerge in this class, will be dealt with at a level appropriate to the age and stage of the student and within a moral framework.
- Parents have the primary responsibility for the teaching of sexuality to their children and RSE is a support to the family in this.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from RSE classes with such withdrawal to be given to the Principal in writing.
- Parents are welcome to view the programme content by appointment with the Principal.
- Visiting speakers on SPHE/RSE topics will be given a copy of the school SPHE/RSE Policy and must speak within the spirit of the policy. Teachers will be present at all times when a guest speaker is visiting a class.

## **Training and Resources**

All resources needed in terms of time, finance and personnel, will be made available to develop and support the SPHE/RSE programme in school. Teacher training is seen as an essential element in delivering the programme. The objectives of this training are to enhance the personal growth of teachers and to enable them to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to teach the programme. The programme will be supported by SPHE Support Service and the Schools Team within the Health Promotion Service of the HSE.

## **Evaluation**

The SPHE Policy will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting of  
**24<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

Signed : *Sr Pius Kelly* (Chairperson)

Next review date : **24<sup>th</sup> January 2022**