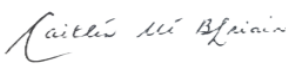




Our Lady of Fatima Special School

Roll No.	19266T
Principal Teacher	Glenda McKeown
Policy	SPHE Policy
Date created	17 September 2026
Date reviewed	
Date Approved and Implemented	30 September 2026
Approved by	
	Chairperson, Board of Management
Date for review	Annually

S.P.H.E.

• **Introductory Statement and Rationale**

a) **Introductory Statement:** This policy was reviewed in 2023, and an amended policy was created to provide a practical framework to support the class teacher and ensure continuity and a common approach to teaching S.P.H.E throughout the whole school. This SPHE Policy has been fully redrafted in September 2026. It builds on our former policy, responds to current Department of Education and Youth requirements, and incorporates the most up-to-date national guidance and circulars. This new SPHE policy ensures that Our Lady of Fatima School adopts a regulation-first, inclusive, universal design for learning (UDL) approach to SPHE, which places student wellbeing, voice, and agency at the centre of teaching and learning.

b) **Rationale:** This plan is a record of whole school decisions in relation to SPHE in line with the Primary School Curriculum 1999, the Primary Curriculum Framework, Junior and Senior Cycle SPHE and Leaving Certificate Applied. The purpose of this policy is to guide the teachers in adopting a consistent and coherent approach to the teaching and learning of SPHE in our school. It is intended to guide teachers in their individual planning for SPHE and to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the curriculum as students' progress through the school.

• **Vision and Aims**

Our Lady of Fatima Special School values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring, inclusive school community. We recognise that SPHE is integral to learning and teaching across all aspects of school life—both in formal classroom programmes and through the everyday interactions, routines, and relationships that shape our students' experiences.

Through our SPHE programme, we support students to:

- Develop self-worth, self-confidence, and a positive sense of identity
- Build respectful, caring relationships with peers and adults
- Understand their rights as individuals
- Accept responsibility for their actions as members of the school and wider community

Differentiation and personalisation

SPHE is tailored to meet the diverse learning needs, communication styles, and developmental levels of our students. Teaching approaches are flexible and multi-sensory, drawing on life skills, visual supports, social stories, and experiential learning.

Partnership with parents and families

Parents and families hold the primary role in their child's social, personal, and health education. We actively encourage parent involvement through consultation, communication, and collaborative planning to ensure continuity between home and school.

Safeguarding and wellbeing

Our SPHE programme supports a whole-school culture of safety, respect, and wellbeing. It contributes to safeguarding awareness, body autonomy, healthy relationships, and emotional regulation in line with *Child Protection Procedures for*

The aim of the SPHE short course at **Junior Cycle** seeks to further reinforce and develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies acquired at primary level. This course aims to build students' self-awareness and positive self-worth; to 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; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society.

The aim of Senior Cycle SPHE is stated as:

To enable students to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and dispositions to support their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing, now and in their future lives.

The specification is grounded in the core values of:

- Respect
- Equality
- Inclusivity
- Responsibility
- Dignity
- Compassion
- Empathy

It builds on Junior Cycle SPHE to deepen core skills (self-awareness, self-management, self-regulation, responsible decision-making, social awareness and relationship skills) and extend health literacy, while preparing students for the transition to adulthood and independent living.

In addition, we emphasise the following:

- To enable the students to develop an awareness of their responsibilities to others in a caring community.
- To enable the students to take greater control of their personal lives as individuals.
- To encourage the students to be active in determining their own learning.
- Ours is a Christian Ethos which commits to the values of care, compassion, hospitality, trust, dignity, respect and diversity.

SPHE Curriculum Framework

The SPHE curriculum is implemented using a two-year strand cycle, following PDST 'Making the Links.' Mandatory programmes such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall, and RSE are integrated across the strands. The Primary Curriculum Framework (2023) highlights wellbeing as central to children's learning and development, and this informs our planning.

Primary Cycle – Middle Primary, Senior Primary and Preparation Class

1. Strands and Strand Units

The curriculum is structured at four distinct levels—infant classes, first and second classes, third and fourth classes, and fifth and sixth classes—and is divided into three strands: **Myself and others**, and **Myself and the wider world**. Each of these strands is further subdivided into several strand units or topic areas that contain objectives.

Our Lady of Fatima School will teach aspects of all three major strands each year. The strand units will be chosen in such a way that the child will engage with a comprehensive Programme in SPHE over a two-year period. The following plan was developed to reflect this approach:

SPHE Rolling Programme: Year 1 & Year 2

Month	Year 1 (2025/26)	Year 2 (2026/27)
Sept/Oct	Myself: Self Identity	Myself and Others: Myself and My Family
Nov/Dec	Myself and Others: Relating to Others	Myself and the Wider World: Media Education
Jan/Feb	Myself: Taking care of my body (full content objectives) RSE	Myself: Safety and Protection Stay Safe Programme in full
Mar/Apr	Myself: Growing and Changing (full content objectives) RSE	Myself: Making decisions Safety Issues from Safety and Protection
May/June	Myself and the Wider World: Developing Citizenship	Myself and Others: My Friends and Other people RSE – Sensitive lessons from Growing and Changing and Taking care of my body

In addition, themes of digital wellbeing, inclusion, regulation, and restorative practice are embedded throughout.

The whole school plan identifies themes for each month which will further inform the teaching of SPHE throughout the school year.

SPHE will be taught based on student level of understanding but in general each class aims to follow the content objectives at the following class levels -

Middle Primary – 1st and 2nd class.

Senior Primary – 3rd and 4th class.

Preparation Class – 5th and 6th class.

Safer Internet Day (first Tuesday of February) – Media Education will be integrated here.

Anti-bullying campaign – November each year– Anti-bullying/cyber-safety will be integrated here.

Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying – Kindness Week will be organized in Term2/3 as part of this process.

Junior Cycle SPHE Implementation in the classes– PP1 – PP3

These classes will cover the Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course (2023 Specification) which has 4 stands and 49 learning outcomes. The Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course strands are:

Strand 1 – Understanding Myself and Others

Strand 2 – Making Healthy Choices

Strand 3 – Relationships and Sexuality

Strand 4 – My Emotional Wellbeing

The short course learning outcomes will be distributed between PP1 – PP3 each covering specific learning outcomes per year. (See Junior Cycle SPHE plan for this distribution)

Pre-Vocational Training

Pre-vocational Training Class is a class for students with more complex learning needs. The SPHE curriculum is embedded in the learning throughout the day with students following the Educoot level 1 Life Skills daily. SPHE is incorporated into the targets for each student in their student support file and students participate in SPHE initiatives in the school. Parental involvement in the teaching of SPHE is ongoing and communication between parents and staff on a regular basis.

PP4 – SPHE

A school developed SPHE course will be implemented in PP4 as a bridge between the learning at Primary and Junior Cycle Level to prepare students for their learning at Senior Cycle Level. The following modules will be taught in 6-8 week blocks.

Module 1 – Who am I?

Module 2 – Relationships and Communication.

Module 3 – Living in a Community.

Module 4 – Health and Wellbeing.

Module 5 – Relationships and Sexuality Education.

Senior Cycle SPHE in LCA Classes – PP5 and PP6

PP5 (LCA Year 1)

MODULE 1

SPHE

Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing

Module 2

MY COMMUNITY

Unit 1: Research Skills

Unit 2: My Own Place

Unit 3: My Family in the Local Area
Unit 4: My Own Place in the Past
Unit 5: Community Amenities/Resources
Unit 6: Planning in My Own Place

Module 3

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES 1

Unit 1: Social Context of Contemporary Issues
Unit 2: Forces/Interests
Unit 3: Making Links
Unit 4: Contemporary Issues and Human Rights
Unit 5: Making Connections
Unit 6: Understanding Concepts

PP6 (LCA Year 2)

Module 4:

SPHE 2

Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality
Strand 3: Into Adulthood

Module 5:

Contemporary Issues 2

Unit 1: Influences on Contemporary Issues: Media
Unit 2: Influences on Contemporary Issues: Interest Groups
Unit 3: Democratic Institutions
Unit 4 a: Active Citizenship: Voting Or b: Active Citizenship:
Unit 5: Civil Rights and Responsibilities
Unit 6: The Wider Picture

Module 6:

Taking Charge

Unit 1: A Place of my Own
Unit 2: Making Ends Meet
Unit 3: Account Options
Unit 4: Saving and Borrowing
Unit 5: Buying My Own Home
Unit 6: Understanding Insurance

Senior Cycle SPHE in Vocational Training Class – Senior Cycle Level 2 Course

Two-Year Plan

Senior Cycle SPHE at Level 2 is delivered through the **Personal Care curriculum area (1 module, 60 hours over two years)** and the **Senior Cycle SPHE specification**. The Level 2 Programme recommends 60 hours for Personal Care; the SPHE learning outcomes can be extended across the two-year cycle by embedding them in the Personal Care module, electives (e.g., Preparation for life after school), and cross-curricular links.

The SPHE specification has **three strands**:

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Relationships and Sexuality

3. Into Adulthood

Month	Year 1	Year 2
September	Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical health: personal hygiene, nutrition, sleep, exercise Emotional health: naming and managing feelings, coping strategies 	Strand 1: Health and Wellbeing (revisit and deepen) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance awareness: medicines, alcohol, drugs – effects and risks Making healthy choices: peer pressure, influences on decisions
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental health awareness: recognising stress, asking for help Safety: personal safety, staying safe at home and in the community <i>Key competencies: Being healthy and well; Managing myself and my learning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessing health information and services Building resilience and self-confidence <i>Key competencies: Being literate; Thinking critically; Managing information</i>
November	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>
December	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>
January	Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality (Part 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy relationships: friendships, trust, respect, boundaries Communication skills: expressing needs, listening, saying no 	Strand 2: Relationships and Sexuality (Part 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Body changes and puberty (revisit/deepen as appropriate) Healthy intimate relationships: love, respect, equality
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consent and personal boundaries Family relationships and changing roles as we grow <i>Key competencies: Communicating; Being creative; Working with others</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sexual health awareness (age-appropriate, as per school policy and SPHE guidance) Online relationships and safety: social media, sharing images, recognising risks <i>Key competencies: Staying well; Communicating; Being creative</i>
March	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>
April	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>	<i>(continuation if needed)</i>
Easter–June	Strand 3: Into Adulthood (Part 1)	Strand 3: Into Adulthood (Part 2)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing independence: self-care, making choices, personal responsibility • Life skills: managing routines, household tasks, money basics • Using community services: shops, transport, leisure facilities • Rights and responsibilities: being a good citizen, treating others with respect <p><i>Key competencies: Being an active citizen; Managing myself and my learning</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing for life after school: pathways, work experience, further education/training • Building independence: travel training, managing appointments, advocating for myself • Living in the community: rights, diversity, inclusion • Looking ahead: hopes, goals, supports available in adulthood <p><i>Key competencies: Being an active citizen; Managing myself and my learning</i></p>
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2. Contexts for SPHE

The teaching of SPHE is facilitated by a positive school atmosphere and climate- creating a health-promoting physical environment, catering for specific individual needs, enhancing self-esteem, fostering inclusive and respectful language, encouraging communication between home and school.

Positive school climate and atmosphere:

In this school we use the following strategies to create a **positive climate and atmosphere:**

- Foster communication within the school
- Foster communication with parents, the local community and outside agencies
- Cater for the individual needs of children.
- Create a health-promoting physical environment.
- Encourage the use of student voice and student council.

- Enhance self-esteem and well-being of pupils, staff and parents.
- Foster respect for human and cultural diversity
- Foster inclusive and respectful language
- Promote respectful and caring relationships throughout the school.

Teachers foster a **positive climate and atmosphere** in their classroom by:

- Encouraging and affirming each student
- Materials used are bias-free and gender equity is promoted.
- Children are encouraged to listen to and appreciate different points of view.
- Seeking opportunities to negotiate class rules and involve children in decision-making.
- Use and encourage the use of respectful and inclusive language.
- Creating a pleasant teaching and learning environment.
- Providing a variety of ways for the children to work and interact positively together.
- Developing appropriate strategies for resolving conflict and rewarding children.

At the first staff meeting of the year all members of the school community are reminded of the importance of promoting a positive school climate. These key messages dealing with school climate and atmosphere are also during the year through newsletters, meetings with parents, monthly assemblies, termly celebrations of achievements and on a regular basis in classes.

- o We cater for the individual needs of the students. Individual needs may be social, emotional, spiritual, physical or intellectual. Through assessment, observation and discussion with parents we strive to identify and meet individual needs.
- o We provide opportunities to enhance the self-esteem of all members of the school community. The staff are aware that their role in helping students to develop their self-esteem is to create an environment within the school that is as positive as possible for all concerned. The five building blocks of self-esteem as outlined in the curriculum have been adopted as our approach to self-esteem development. They are:
 - A sense of identity
 - A sense of belonging
 - A sense of security
 - A sense of purpose
 - A sense of competence.
- o We aim to actively value diversity and to prioritise inclusive and respectful language. We will prioritise both cultural and gender equality and respect for those with additional learning needs. We believe that children learn to respect themselves and others through experiencing respect in their own lives and through witnessing respect being shown to others.
- o We work to develop an effective communication system within the school and between school and home. Attention will be paid to encouraging everyone to express opinions and concerns and to respond to the opinions and concerns of others as a dimension of classroom work and general school life.
- o We support a health-promoting physical environment. Through our Health and Safety policy and the health education section of our PE programme we have set out how we will promote health and safety awareness and how we intend to deal with unsatisfactory aspects of our environment. Emphasis on healthy lunches, healthy lifestyle, road, water, farm safety and regular fire drills are some

of the areas promoted. Taking responsibility and pride in the school environment is through constant review and promotion of behaviour and habits required for maintaining a clean environment.

- o We promote democratic processes in all levels of school life while balancing roles, rights and responsibilities. Students experience and practice the democratic process by:
 - Negotiating the class contract at the start of the year
 - Sharing responsibility
 - Student council
 - Student voice
 - Experiencing a sense of belonging to their own class group and the wider school community
 - Developing a sense of commitment to common goals.

We have agreed that we will prioritise care in our own behaviour as adults and in our expectations of students. We will help students to learn to care for each other through actively building relationships within each class. We will seek to build identity, security and belonging, competence and purpose through.

- Discussion, promotion of and valuing difference
- Agreeing ground rules for responsible behaviour and clarifying values on an ongoing basis
- Caring for and promoting inclusion of others
- Promoting inclusive and respectful language
- Promoting support and co-operation
- Respecting individual strengths
- Supporting individual needs through teacher support and prefect's system
- Creating meaningful differentiated learning opportunities
- Celebrating the wide range of student's strengths at various times
- Communicating regularly about learning and general development with the home.

Time Allocation

Wellbeing at primary level incorporates SPHE and PE in the new Primary Curriculum Framework.

Wellbeing is timetabled weekly for 2 hours 30 minutes in stage 1 (Junior Primary) and 3 hours for Middle Primary – Preparation Class. Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE programme as possible. Wellbeing time allocation is used to develop and practise skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in other areas of the curriculum. It has been agreed that content objectives dealing with RSE, and child protection are addressed through discrete time in term three of each year. At the Junior and Senior Cycle level, S.P.H.E. will be timetabled for one class period per week as a standalone subject but will be integrated across the curriculum with separate class periods for personal care learning units.

Integration

At each class level, teachers should seek to integrate SPHE with other curricular areas. Many aspects of SPHE can be dealt with in the context of English, SESE, Visual Arts, Drama, CSPE, Home Economics, and P.E. SPHE will be integrated with the priority learning units of the Junior Cycle Level Two which is taught in PP1 – PP3. The priority learning units of Personal Care, living in a Community and Preparing for Work as well as

the level 2 short courses are closely linked to the content objectives and learning outcomes of the SPHE curriculum both at primary level and Junior Cycle level. SPHE is also integrated across the Senior Cycle at both Level 2 and LCA.

3. Approaches and Methodologies

Teachers agree that active learning is the principal learning and teaching approach used in the SPHE programme. The following active learning strategies are promoted for SPHE:

- o Drama activities
- o Co-operative games
- o Collaborative Learning
- o Skills through content
- o Use of environment
- o Problem solving
- o Pictures, photographs, case studies and visual images
- o Discussion: in pairs, small groups, with whole class
- o Written activities: surveys, questionnaires, lists, checklists, projects, worksheets
- o Digital technologies
- o Reflection on student work: portfolios, projects.
- o School events throughout the year – anti-bullying week, Safer Internet Day, Food Dudes intervention week, Active Week and Green Schools.

4. Assessment

Student's progress in SPHE is assessed through:

(a) Teacher observation:

- o The ability of a student to co-operate and work in groups or to work independently.
- o The informal interactions between the student and adults and between the student and other student
- o Physical and emotional maturity
- o The quality of presentation of work
- o The participation and interest of the student in a variety of activities.

(b) Teacher-designed tasks:

SPHE includes areas of knowledge and understanding that will need to be assessed at regular intervals. Specific tasks can be used to ascertain a student's ability to apply skills in different situations.

(c) Work samples, Portfolios and projects:

Teachers have decided that students will keep personal folders of their work (updated termly).

(d) Student Self-assessment / Peer Assessment:

Students are encouraged to engage in assessing their own progress in SPHE and to reflect on their learning through being involved in selecting work for portfolios/work samples.

(e) Programme Evaluation – this is completed informally & formally at staff meetings or planning days. It will also be reviewed when S.P.H.E. is reviewed on a 2-year basis.

Recording data from these methods of assessment can contribute to the overall picture of a student's development and can be used as a reference for the teacher when planning for SPHE and in communicating with the student, parents, other teachers or the principal.

5. Differentiation and Inclusion.

The SPHE programme aims to meet the needs of all students in the school. This will be achieved by using a universal design for learning approach to promote inclusion and learning approaches that are appropriate and responsive to the diverse needs of the students.

6. Equality of participation and access

The SPHE programme is viewed as playing a key role in ensuring equality of opportunities for all students. The programme at each class level will be flexible so that the learning requirements of all students may be addressed. We provide an equal educational experience for both male and female students. Students from other cultures and ethnic backgrounds will be included in all activities.

7. Policies that support SPHE

RSE policy
Code of Behaviour
Anti-bullying Policy
Health and Safety
Acceptable Use Policy
Child Safeguarding Statement
Bi Cinelta Policy

8. Staff Development

Teachers are made aware of any opportunities for CPD through Oide, HSE and NCSE. Skills and expertise within the school are shared and developed through the sharing of knowledge at staff meetings.

Relevant SPHE Staff Training to date:

PDST Introduction to SPHE – J. Harpur and N. Bridge 05/02/2019 and 06/02/2019

PDST Junior Cycle RSE – J. Harpur and N. Bridges 13/02/2019 and 14/02/2019

OIDE Junior Cycle SPHE – J. Harpur and N. Bridges – 21/09/2023 and 28/09/2023

OIDE Wellbeing in Primary Education – J. Harpur and N. Bridges – 29/11/2023

Flourish Webinar – J. Harpur – 20/09/2023

OIDE Junior Cycle RSE – N. Bridges

OIDE Senior Cycle RSE – N. Bridges

OIDE Senior Cycle RSE – Gayle weld, Eileen Kent, Emer Frayne, Eleanor Murphy.

9. Home-School communication Links

SPHE is a shared responsibility between family at home and school. The following list sets out the agreement reached by the teachers, the Parents' Association and the Board of Management:

- Copies of the school plan for SPHE are available from the office.
- Key elements of the SPHE plan will be outlined in the school's information booklet given to all families on enrolment.
- Parents will be made aware of content objectives that deal with 'sensitive' issues and will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school.

- A consent letter with information is sent home prior to any teaching of Stay Safe and RSE in school.

10. Community Links

The school will liaise with the Health Promotion Unit of the local Health Board, community Garda and other agencies to assist, as appropriate, the school's programme for SPHE.

11.Success Criteria

Assessment is a central part of the everyday teaching and learning process in SPHE.

Many of the learning outcomes at primary and post-primary level are dependent on the emotional, intellectual, and social maturity of the individual student and rates of progress can vary considerably. This may be reflected in an individual student support file following discussion between teacher and parent/guardian.

■ Implementation

(a) Roles and Responsibilities: Class teachers are responsible for the implementation of the SPHE programme for their own classes. The principal has overall responsibility for coordinating SPHE in the school with the support of the Wellbeing and SPHE co-ordinator.

(b) Timeframe: From September 2026 onwards.

■ Review

Progress made during the school year will be formally reviewed at the end of the year and policy updated on a 2-year basis.

■ Ratification and Communication

Approved and Implemented by the Board of Management on: **30 September 2026**



Signed:

Chairperson BoM

