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SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (SPHE)

Introductory Statement and Rationale

Introductory Statement: Following in-service with Marion Flanagan, facilitator with PDST and Paula Long (NEPS) in 2019, it was decided to draw up a whole school plan in SPHE.

Rationale: The plan is a record of whole school decisions in relation to SPHE in line with the Primary Curriculum 1999. Its purpose 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 to ensure appropriate coverage of all aspects of the curriculum from Infants to Sixth Class.

As St. Comán's Wood Primary School is a new school following the amalgamation of the boys' Abbey N.S. and girls' Convent primary school, a need was identified to draw up a 2 year plan for SPHE, under the three strands, specifying the five strand units to be covered each year, ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum. In doing so the following will be adhered to:

- o The Stay Safe programme will be taught in its entirety over one school year - Infants, 1st, 3rd and 5th (see Appendix A)
- o The RSE content will be taught over a two year period with the strands "Growing and Changing" and "Taking Care of my Body" covered in Infants, 2nd, 4th and 6th of the 2 year SPHE plan (see Appendix A)

Vision and Aims

Our school values the uniqueness of all individuals within a caring school community. We recognise that SPHE is intrinsic to the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom. Through our SPHE programme we wish to assist children to develop feelings of self-worth and self-confidence while encouraging their ability to relate to others in a positive way. The programme also encourages children to be aware of their rights as an individual while at the same time accepting responsibility for their actions as members of the school and the wider community. Parents have the primary role in the social, personal and health education of their children so their involvement will be encouraged as much as possible.

We endorse the aims and objectives of the Curriculum for SPHE and in addition we emphasise the following:

- To enable the children to develop an awareness of their responsibilities to others in a caring community
- To enable the children to take greater control of their personal lives as individuals
- To encourage the children to be active in determining their own learning.

Principal: Dr. Úna Feeley

CONTENT OF THE PLAN

Strands and Strand Units

SPHE is planned in such a way that the child will receive a comprehensive programme in SPHE over a two year period. Teachers are familiar with the content objectives for their class level. The strand units not covered in year one must be included in the teacher's planning for the following year. In some cases it may be necessary to revise specific objectives from the previous year.

Active learning is the principal teaching and learning approach recommended for SPHE. The SPHE programme reflects a spiral approach, where similar aspects are revisited in different ways according to the age, stage of development and readiness of the child. SPHE is intrinsic to the learning and teaching that occurs both formally and informally in the school and in the classroom.

Contexts for SPHE

SPHE will be taught through a combination of contexts

- Positive school climate and atmosphere
- Discrete time
- Integration with other subject areas

Positive school climate and atmosphere

Teachers are aware of the importance of promoting a positive school climate. Our key messages are:

- We cater for the individual needs of the children. 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.
- We provide opportunities to enhance the self-esteem of all members of the school community. The staff is aware that their role in helping children to develop their self-esteem is to create an environment within the school that is as positive as possible for all concerned.
- We aim to actively value diversity and to prioritise inclusive and respectful language. 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.
- We work to develop an effective communication system with the school and between school and home.
- We support a health-promoting physical environment. Emphasis on healthy lunches, healthy lifestyle, road, water, and regular fire drills are some of the areas promoted. Taking responsibility and pride in the school environment is encouraged through our litter prevention programme, our involvement in the Green Schools programme and through constant review and promotion of behaviour habits required for maintaining a clean environment.
- We promote democratic processes in all levels of school life while balancing roles, rights and responsibilities. Children experience and practice the democratic process by:
 - Negotiating the class rules at the start of the year
 - Sharing responsibility
 - Valuing the opinion of others
 - Experiencing a sense of belonging to their own class group and the wider school community
 - Developing a sense of commitment to common goals.

Discrete time

SPHE may be timetabled for ½ hour per week. One hour per fortnight or blocks of 1 – 2 hours per month where feasible or appropriate. Children who are withdrawn for supplementary teaching must be included for as much of the SPHE programme as possible. The discrete time is used to develop and practise particular skills, deal with sensitive issues or explore issues that are not addressed in

other areas of the curriculum. Content objectives dealing with RSE and child protection are addressed through discrete time.

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 Religion, English, Gaeilge, SESE, Visual Arts, Drama.

Approaches and methodologies

Teachers know 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 Cooperative games
- o Pictures, photographs and visual images
- o Discussion: in pairs, small groups, with whole class
- o Written activities: surveys, questionnaires, lists, check-lists, projects, worksheets
- o Media Studies
- o Information and communication technologies
- o Looking at children's work: portfolios, projects ...
- o Other strategies as devised by the class teacher

Assessment

Children's progress in SPHE is assessed mainly through teacher observation:

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

Children with different needs

The requirements of children with special needs will be taken into consideration when planning class lessons and related activities. Children who experience bereavement or loss, serious illness or other major personal situations are supported and consideration is given to meeting their individual needs in the most appropriate manner.

Equality of participation and access

We view the SPHE programme as playing a key role in ensuring equality of opportunity for all children.

Policies and programmes that support SPHE

SPHE links with other policies/ programmes used in the school – Stay Safe, Child Protection, Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying, Health and Safety statement, Healthy Eating, Care of the Environment. Teachers are expected to be familiar with these policies and ensure that the schools agreed policy is followed when addressing these issues.

Relationships and Sexuality in Education and Stay Safe Programme

In circular 2/95 issued by the Department of Education and Science the minister requested all schools to introduce Relationship Sexuality Education (RSE) as part of the curriculum. In the 1999 curriculum RSE was included in Social Personal and Health Education.

RSE is a life long process of acquiring knowledge and understanding and of developing attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy. In a school situation RSE, provides structured opportunities for pupils to acquire a knowledge and understanding of human relationships and sexuality through processes which enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework, **appropriate to their age**. RSE will be taught in accordance with the Department's directives and within the Philosophy framework of the school. **Teachers will not teach any content outside the Religion programme used by the school or the DES curriculum.** The teaching methods used in the school are child centred and reflect the age and stage of development of each child. Sensitive issues will be dealt with appropriately.

Overview of RSE PROGRAMME

Aims:

In partnership with the home our aims are:

- To provide opportunities for our pupils to learn about relationships and sexuality, imparted in a loving and caring way, within a wholesome environment
- To help them think and act in a moral caring and responsible way
- To learn about their own development and about their friendships and relationships with others.

The development of relationships is an integral part of all curriculum subjects. Aspects of RSE are taught during SPHE, Religion, Science, implementation of the Code of Behaviour etc. An integrative approach towards RSE ensures that the children encounter RSE in a holistic manner rather than in isolation.

Content:

Junior Infants, Senior Infants, 1st/2nd class

Naming parts of the body including parts of the male and female body using appropriate anatomical terms (10 minutes approx.).

3rd/4th classes

Sequence of development of the human baby from conception to birth.

(40 minutes approx.)

5th /6th classes

Changes in male and female bodies as they grow

Puberty

Reproductive system of male and female

Understanding sexual intercourse, conception and birth.

(3 hours approx.)

Dealing with Questions:

Teachers do not cover content outside that of the DES curriculum or the school's religion programme. Topics excluded include contraception, same sex relationships, abortion etc. Answers to questions must be in line with the Catholic Church's teaching i.e. sexual intercourse will be discussed within the context of marriage. At the same time teachers should answer questions sensitively aware that there are children in our school from many social backgrounds. No child should be made feel uncomfortable or embarrassed when these issues are raised.

Children, who ask questions in class on content outside the curriculum taught, should be talked to individually and discreetly, as soon as is possible, by the teacher and encouraged to seek answers from their parents. If a child poses such a question the parents will be informed and asked not to ignore it but to deal with it as they see fit.

Overview of STAY SAFE PROGRAMME

Aim:

To teach children personal safety skills so they can look after themselves in situations which could be upsetting or dangerous.

Content:

The lessons cover the following areas:

- Feeling Safe and Unsafe
- Friendship and Bullying
- Touches
- Secrets and Telling
- Strangers

Children participating in this programme will learn:

- To distinguish between safe and unsafe feelings
- What to do if lost
- What to do if the phone or doorbell rings when they are alone in the house
- The importance of friends in children's lives
- What to do if bullied
- Stay Safe Rules: Say No/ Get Away/ Tell
- Why not to bully others
- Appreciating normal, appropriate touches
- That unsafe touches should never be kept secret
- How to respond to inappropriate touches (Stay Safe Rules)
- Good and bad secrets
- That some secrets should not be kept
- Who and how to tell if in trouble
- About strangers and safety strategies

Request for withdrawal by parent of pupil or teacher:

If parents are concerned about the more sensitive aspects of the RSE or Stay Safe programmes, they are welcome to visit the school to examine the content of the programmes and discuss their concerns with the principal. Following this meeting if parents wish to have their child/ren withdrawn when sensitive issues are being taught, they are requested to submit this in writing to the Principal. Parents will be expected to make their wishes known each year to the new class teacher. Efforts will be made by the school, using the resources it has, to accommodate these children by providing supervision within another classroom. Teachers cannot be held responsible for language used necessarily in school life or by children.

A teacher who is concerned about teaching a particular topic within the RSE or Stay Safe programme should talk to the principal about his/her concerns. Such concerns will be handled discreetly. The BOM will endeavour to accommodate such teachers. Resources outside the school profession will be availed of if considered appropriate.

Timetable:

Teachers will decide the timetabling of RSE/Stay Safe lessons and a letter will be sent to parents prior to the commencement of these lessons. If there is no request for the withdrawal of a child from this work the lessons should be spread throughout the term/s rather than taught within a concentrated timeframe. This allows the children the time to absorb the values within which this knowledge is presented.

Child Protection:

The school follows the DES Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures, which are based on Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. The principal is the

designated liaison person (DLP). Each teacher has a copy of our Child Safeguarding Statement and a copy is available to parents, through the secretary, if they request one.

Resources

A comprehensive selection of resources is available in the staff room for teaching all strand units including *Walk Tall, Stay Safe programme, Relationships and Sexuality (DES), Circle Time.*

Videos/DVDs

Teachers should not use videos/DVDs or TV programmes for SPHE without consulting the principal.

Parental involvement

SPHE is a shared responsibility between family and school.

- o The school plan for SPHE is available on the school website.
- o Parents will be made aware of content objectives that deal with 'sensitive' issues before teachers cover these in class and will be asked to discuss these issues with their child prior to the lessons in school.

Community links

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

St. Comán's Wood Primary School		
Social, Personal and Health Education - Two Year Grid		
Strand	Strand Units Infants, 2nd, 4th, 6th *** Revision of STAY SAFE taught the previous year	Strand Units Infants, 1st, 3rd, 5th. *** STAY SAFE Programme taught in its entirety
Myself	<i>Self-identity (Sept.–Oct.)</i> <i>Revision of Stay Safe core</i> <i>messages taught the previous</i> <i>year.</i>	<i>Safety and Protection</i> <i>(Jan-Feb)-Stay Safe</i>
	<i>Taking care of my body(Jan-Feb)</i> <i>Taught specifically in Infants,</i> <i>2nd, 4th, 6th</i> <i>Revised in 1st/3rd/5th</i>	<i>Revision of “Taking care of my</i> <i>Body” and “Growing and</i> <i>Changing” language and content,</i> <i>taught the previous year.</i> <i>Making Decisions (March-April)</i> <i>*This strand unit is for third to</i> <i>sixth only.</i>
	<i>Growing and Changing</i> <i>(Mar-April)</i> <i>Taught specifically in Infants,</i> <i>2nd, 4th, 6th</i> <i>Revised in 1st/3rd/5th</i>	<i>Infants to second complete the</i> <i>Safety Issues section of Safety and</i> <i>Protection</i>
Myself and others	<i>Myself and My Family (Nov.-Dec.)</i>	<i>My friends and other people</i> <i>(May-June)</i>
		<i>Relating to others (Sept-Oct.)</i>
Myself and the wider world	<i>Developing Citizenship</i> <i>(May-June)</i>	<i>Media Education (Nov-Dec.)</i>